

# The United Methodist Manual for New Church Development

United Methodist  
New Church Developers  
Network

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The United Methodist Church  
Manual for New Church Development

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*Equipping leaders with both knowledge and skills to move toward successful church starts.*

## THE UNITED METHODIST MANUAL FOR NEW CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

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# Part One: Foundational Material



## Creating New Faith Communities

By Craig Kennet Miller, General Board of Discipleship

As we enter the twenty-first century, the most effective form of evangelism is creating new faith communities. What is a faith community? It is a worship experience linked to a discipleship system that introduces newcomers to the Christian faith and creates settings where they can come to know and believe in Jesus Christ. But it doesn't stop there. The congregation also provides ways for new Christians to mature in faith and to learn to use their spiritual gifts for ministry.

The United Methodist Church is establishing new faith communities in three primary ways: (1) by starting new churches; (2) through existing congregations that link their current worship with a discipleship system; and (3) by starting new worship experiences in an existing church that are linked to a discipleship system. The importance of establishing new faith communities can be seen in the following five trends.

### Five Trends Shaping the Twenty-First Century

#### 1. High Growth and Mobility of the U.S. Population

The 2000 U.S. Census reported that for the first time in a century every state in the nation gained in population. Rather than living in a place of population decline, the total population will continue to grow. The U.S. Census projects a 23 percent increase in total population from 2000 to 2025.

From 1991 to 2001, more than 422 million people moved. One hundred fifty-one million moved from one county to another, which means that those involved in a local congregation in one county would need to find a new church in the new county because of the distance involved.

This vast movement of people in the last decade has created new opportunities for churches around the country. When people move into a new community, there is an opportunity for a church to welcome them and invite them to become active in the church. Even more important, most people are not going to be lifelong members of one local church. Rather, as people move into new communities, they will be looking for ways to connect with the community. One of those ways is through becoming part of a local church. Local churches that focus on creating faith communities that are open to new people are the ones that will grow.

#### 2. The New Youth Boom

Presently, there are more children and youth in school than at any other time in U.S. history. They are the Millennial Generation (born 1982-99). More numerous than the Baby Boomers and the Postmoderns when they were young, this generation will set the trends for the next ten years. By 2006 the youth boom will be larger than that of the '60s and '70s. Congregations that create ministry for the Millennials are the ones that will meet the needs of a new generation. Creating faith communities that speak to the families of the Millennials will be a key strategy for churches in the first decade of the new century. Taken from *The Congregational Development Manual*, page 2 of 4 Copyright © 2005 General Board of Discipleship. All rights reserved. Do not reproduce without permission.

#### 3. Aging of the Baby Boomers

Even while observing the birth of a new generation, the Baby Boomers will be creating new trends themselves as they move toward retirement. During the next two decades, record numbers of Americans will turn 50. By 2020, the number of those over 65 will double. As people age and move into retirement, churches will face the challenge of providing faith communities geared to their needs. A focus on spirituality, using gifts for ministry, addressing issues related to health and wellness, and teaching Boomers how to give back to society will be key.

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#### 4. The Multiethnic Society

The 1990's could be called the decade of immigration. From 1990 to 2000, the foreign-born population increased by 57 percent to 31 million. In 2000, eleven percent of the population was foreign-born. Many communities are living in a multiethnic world. A key strategy for evangelism is creating new faith communities for specific people groups defined by language, race, ethnicity, and generation.

Because the Millennial Generation has greater racial ethnic diversity than previous generations, a key to ministry with Millennials will be the creation of single-culture, multiethnic faith communities that reflect the demographic make-up of their population. This diversity will continue to increase as we move through the twenty-first century.

#### 5. The Communications Revolution

The communications revolution brought about by the computer continues to accelerate. Networking via fax, Internet, and e-mail has changed the way people interact. On the horizon are devices that will incorporate all three, plus live video and phone. As the printing press changed the world 500 years ago, the computer chip will continue to change the way we communicate. Churches that tap into new ways of communicating will find new ways to stay connected with members, new ways to equip and train people for ministry, and new opportunities for sharing their faith in Jesus Christ.

#### New Opportunities Abound

As a result of the intermixing of these five trends, congregations find themselves in a world much different from that of even forty years ago. As they learn to operate in new ways, they must:

- Move from signing up members to developing disciples.
- Create systems of discipleship that assist people through different stages of spiritual development.
- Create a flexible church structure whose strength lies in relationships, rather than in the layout of the organizational chart.
- Learn to create new faith communities that speak to the new people groups moving into the cities and towns.

#### New Congregational Development and Annual Conferences

An exciting trend in The United Methodist Church in the last decade has been a renewed emphasis on starting new churches. Those annual conferences focused on starting new churches have turned their membership decline around. For example, the North Alabama Annual Conference, through their Academy of Congregational Development, has trained a pool of potential new church starters and has started twenty-three new churches. The membership of the entire annual conference is now on an upswing because of the new churches started and the new people they attract.

Looking across the United Methodist landscape, these key principals are being put into action:

- Leadership is key. Invest in leadership training and development, rather than property and buildings.
- Existing congregations benefit from new church starts in their area. New church development is the research and development wing of the annual conference. By blazing new trails and having the freedom to experiment, new churches can teach existing churches how to reach new people groups.
- Build the discipleship system first, then invite people to worship. Some recent new church starts have taken nine to twelve months to start twelve small groups of twelve adults. After reaching that number, a worship experience was launched that included the total number. As a result, the church broke the first growth barrier of 120 in worship at inception.
- Worship that speaks to the needs of those in the community is vital to the success of the congregation.
- Churches that have 120 and more in the first public worship service have a better track record of continued growth. The number attending the first worship service largely determines the future size of the congregation.

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- Congregations that wait until they have from 120 to 300 or more the first time a worship experience is offered are in a much better position to reach a greater number of people. Some church planters may spend over a year developing the discipleship system before being ready to launch the first public worship experience.

### Starting New Faith Communities

It was once said that The United Methodist Church did not know how to start churches. That is no longer true. Throughout the connection, numerous examples of new churches that are having great success can be highlighted. New church leaders are now taught a five-step process for creating new faith communities.

**1. Train and equip leaders:** Before sending a pastor or a lay team to start a new church, train them. Annual conferences that invest in creating a pool of trained leaders for new church starts find themselves in the position to successfully launch new churches. The skills that are learned can also be applied to ministry in existing congregations.

**2. Identify people groups:** A faith community is most effective when it is in ministry to a people group. Through demographics, congregations can discover the people groups in their communities and create faith communities that speak to their needs and dreams. A people group may be a racial-ethnic group, a language group, a generational group, or a combination. People groups share common beliefs and history, have similar circumstances, and look toward a common future.

Many congregations find that by establishing multiple faith communities, they meet the needs of multiple people groups. For example, when a church decides to start a new worship service to reach a younger generation, it is in the process of developing a new worship experience for a different people group in the community. This generational group has different values, beliefs, and musical tastes from those who attend the current worship experience. By also developing a discipleship system that links to the new worship experience, a congregation creates a new faith community that can transform the lives of those who become part of the ministry of the church.

**3. Develop a healthy core group:** The first job of a new church start leader or of the leadership core of an existing congregation that receives a new pastor is to establish a healthy core group. This is essential for developing a sustainable ministry.

What are the characteristics of a healthy core group? They live out the spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith — praying for one another, holding one another accountable, reflecting on Scripture, and asking God for a common vision that will lead the congregation into the future.

**4. Develop a discipleship system:** A discipleship system is designed to equip and nourish Christians as they mature in faith. Typically, it involves a combination of small groups (8-15 people) and fellowship/instruction groups (50-90 people) linked to public worship.

**5. Launch public worship:** The next critical step is the launching of public worship. Public worship is when the neighborhood and surrounding community are invited to join in worship. Studies show the importance of having more than 120 people at the first offering of a new worship experience — especially for new church starts and for worship services started by existing churches at nontraditional times (Saturday / Sunday evening).

**More Info** For more information about new church starts in the United States, please visit us on the web: [www.umcnewchurchstarts.org](http://www.umcnewchurchstarts.org).

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# An Overview of the Biblical Foundations for New Church Development

By Dr. Wesley S.K. Daniel, Director, Evangelism Ministries

## General Board of Discipleship

Striving to grow and revitalize the Church of Jesus Christ encourages faithfulness to the Great Commission of our Lord to make disciples and be His witnesses. Further, by equipping and nurturing disciples to grow in Christian discipleship, the kingdom of God is thereby built, expanded and extended throughout the world.

It is imperative to fully comprehend and understand the teaching of the Scripture as the subject of growth, revitalization and new church development is considered. In Matthew 16.18, Jesus declared, "Upon this rock I will build my church..." In this article, an attempt will be made to explore how God began the "building program," the program of building God's church from the very beginning of time, and the program that continues to challenge the Church today to be about the task of proclaiming the Good News and expanding the kingdom of God.

## Old Testament Understanding of Growing the Church

God's plan for the growth of the Body of Christ begins in Genesis 1.28 when God says to Adam, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion." This is simply more than an attempt to promote biological growth. What God also meant is that the earth is to be filled with "knowers of God." Adam was called to extend the "garden of God" to the uttermost boundaries of the entire earth (Ezekiel 28.13; 31.8-9). It was God's expressive desire to fill the earth with priests, kings and prophets so that the covenant purposes of the grace of God can be fulfilled throughout the earth.

In Genesis 3.15, the loving heart of God can be seen reaching out to Adam and Eve. Even though they had sinned, God gives them "the promise of the One who will bruise the serpent's head, lifting the curse." By faith, the son of Adam and Eve, Abel, offered the blood of the lamb as his offering (Hebrews 11.4; Genesis 4.4), and that faith came by hearing God's Word (Romans 10.17). Cain heard the Word of God, but he rejected it; and yet God pled with him for his repentance (Genesis 4.7). Seth, the next son born to Adam and Eve, promulgated God's Word in a way that the future generations included Enoch and Noah. Enoch prophesied of the Lord's coming, "With ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment..." (Jude 14-15). Noah, says the Scripture, is justified by faith (Genesis 6.8-9; Hebrews 11.7), and thus became the progenitor of all humankind.

Further, in Genesis 12, God revealed Himself to Abraham and called Abraham to usher into being "a nation of priests" who would proclaim the Jehovah to the world. Through Abraham's descendents, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and Joseph, God's continued redemptive work to save and reach out in love to draw people into His fellowship is observed.

In the book of Exodus, it is further perceived how the redemptive God remembers to keep God's side of the covenant promise of blessing to the nations of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus 2.24). Over and over again, God gives Pharaoh many opportunities to "repent" as He sends Moses to deliver His people. Even in the awesome history-making division between Egypt and Israel (Exodus 8.23; 9.4; 11.7), through plagues and the dividing of the sea, the nations bear witness to the salvation of God (Exodus 7.5). And God rightfully declares, "And the Egyptians will know that I am the Jehovah, when I have gotten my honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots and upon his housemen," (14.18). The song of deliverance sung at the shores of the Red Sea clearly acknowledges the redemptive work of God: "The people have heard, they tremble; pagans have taken hold on the inhabitants of Philistia. Then were the chiefs of the Edom dismayed; the mighty men of Moab trembling taken hold of them; all the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away" (Exodus 15.15).

Other examples of what God had in store for the pagans are Rehab the Canaanite (Joshua 2; 6.17; Hebrews 11.31), and Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 1.16-17; Matthew 1.5). God made it clear to the Israelites that He did not love them more than the pagans around them, but that they, the Israelites, were special to God because

He had chosen them so that through their witness the whole earth would be made aware of God's redeeming love, redemption, and provision for the salvation of all persons.

This intention of God was well understood by the Psalmists, especially David, who had the clearest revelation of all. The Psalmists encouraged God's people to sing praise to the God of salvation: "to the ends of the earth" and to the "uttermost parts" (2.8; 65.8). Approximately fifteen times it is proclaimed that nations will worship the living God: "All the nations: will call him blessed (72,17), and this salvation is to be received by the nations (67.2). God is the king of all the earth (47.8), and kings and rulers will bow before him (2.10-11). Prophetically speaking of Messiah, the Father promises, "I will give you the heathen for your inheritance" (2.8). As Israel reveals God as Savior and Judge (67.3-7), other nations will be enlightened and forsake idols (96.1-13). Israel was, in her worship, something very akin to the New Testament Church shown in the Psalmists encouragement of prayer, praise, and testimony in the community of faith (22.22-25; 35.18; 107.32). It is no wonder that the book of Psalms is filled with exhortations to praise Jehovah, whose love, mercy, and grace are revealed to all who need deliverance from sin, hopelessness and loneliness.

In the ministry of the prophets, furthermore, Isaiah talks about the Messiah as the Light unto the Gentile world (Isaiah 42.6; 60.3). Isaiah speaks of Israel as the vineyard planted by God (Isaiah 5.1ff) who carried the fruits of her sin, briars and thorns (Isaiah 7.23-25; 9.18; 10.17; 27.4; 32.13; 33.12). Jeremiah speaks of the day when "all the nations" will be gathered to Jerusalem, "to speak of the name of the Lord." Prophet Haggai proclaims the Lord to be "the desire of all nations" (2.7), and Habakkuk realizes that it is God's yearning that all the earth "is filled with knowledge of the glory of the Lord..." (2.4). Finally, in the book of Jonah, the missionary nature and heart of God can perhaps best be seen.

God is also discerned in the Old Testament as the: 1) God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is a God who SEEKS OUT; 2) God of the Old Testament is a God who desires to RECONCILE AND RESTORE broken relationships; 3) God of the Old Testament is a God who TRANSFORMS human nature and makes all things new; 4) God of the Old Testament is a God who REDEEMS, RESTORES, AND DEVELOPS individuals and nations to grow and blossom; and, 5) God of the Old Testament is also a God who brings SALVATION, PEACE AND LIFE ETERNAL to all those who seek Him.

The Old Testament is not simply a collection of historical writings, but it is the history of the faith-formation and building of God's people... and, it is filled with acts of God's saving grace within history. These acts of God in history provide the very foundation of Israel's faith; being unique because it is essentially works of salvation -- acts of God's saving power of God's people. Such salvation history of the Old Testament becomes a background by which God's unconditional love, saving action and the growth and expansion of God's church is fully discerned.

Throughout the Old Testament, it is revealed how God extended God's grace and love to people and nations so that ALL may be redeemed, restored, saved and brought into the loving embrace of God. Although terms such as "church growth, evangelism, new church development, revitalization" do not appear in the Old Testament, it is clearly evident that the concepts of God's love, divine grace, salvation, spiritual and numerical growth, church development and discipleship are clearly present.

### **New Testament Understanding of Growing the Church**

God's divine will to save all people and bring them to redemption, as seen in the Old Testament times, is stated even more explicitly in the New Testament writings. The coming of the Holy Spirit marks the beginning of the God's harvest to build, extend and expand the Church of God.

More than any other book in the New Testament, in the book of Acts people are seen responding in large numbers to the salvation message offered through the power of the Gospel. As mentioned in Acts, the early church grew at a rapid rate. In Acts 1.15, it is explained that the church was begun with 120 people. At Pentecost, however, the congregation grew to 3,000 (2.41). Later, the growth continues to five thousand believers. Luke writes, "The Lord added to their number daily" (Acts 2.47), and Acts 5.14 indicates there were even more believers in multitudes added to the Body of Christ.

In Acts 6.7, the number of disciples increased in Jerusalem daily. A great awakening in Samaria takes place (8.5-25). Further, the churches in Judea, Galilee and Samaria multiplied and grew (9.31), and all who were living in Lydia and Sharon and Joppa also believed (9.35,42). Acts 11.21, 24 and 26 tells of a movement in

Antioch, and it says that many believed and turned to Christ. The first part of Acts concludes with this statement: “But the Word of the Lord continued to grow and was multiplied” (12.24). In 21.20, James, summarizing the results of the growth of the church says that there were tens and thousands of Jewish believers in Jerusalem and the community. Paul’s report given to the Jerusalem church, recorded in 21.20, acknowledges that thousands of Jews were added to faith in Christ. The book of Acts unequivocally provides a clear picture of the numerical, as well as the spiritual expansion of the early church. Similar accounts of the growth of the church are recorded in Acts 13.48-49.

There are other references to growth in the development of the church as well: Acts 13.43-44, 48-49; 14.20-21; 16.5; 17.2,4; 18.8-11; 28.24,30-31; Ephesians 19.10; Romans 28.31; 15.19,23. Luke further elaborates on the maturity and breadth of the growth and expansion of the church in Acts. In addition to the numerical and geographical growth of the early church, Luke also gives attention to growth in moral, ethical and spiritual dimensions as well.

As one studies the growth dimension of the early church in the New Testament, one will discover that there were basically four dimensions of growth: growth in spiritual life; growth in Christian fellowship and prayer, growth out in Christian service, and finally, growth in numbers.

God’s plan for the growth and expansion of the Church cannot be ignored in the New Testament; it is clearly seen throughout the writings of the New Testament and especially, in the Book of Acts. In fact, carefully reading the entire Scripture with “growth eyes,” it is difficult to conclude anything other than the Old and New Testaments were written by missionaries to missionaries. In this respect, they are the greatest manuals for growing and expanding the Church of Jesus Christ!

### God Wills and Wants the Church to Grow

Why should the church be engaged in the ministry of seeking the lost? Why should the church be engaged in the ministry of proclaiming the Good News and building new faith communities? Why must Christian believers be concerned about the growth and revitalization of the Body of Christ? Why must the task of saving the lost and the proclamation of the Good News be the top priority in the life and the mission of the church? I believe the answers to these questions are simple: God demands it! God wills and wants the Church of Jesus Christ to multiply, grow and expand.

When we talk about the growth of the church and new church development, it needs to be understood as a theological stance. It rises out of unshakable theological conviction that God desires and wants the kingdom of God to expand, spread and grow. In fact, God requires it.

Growing the Body of Christ, making new disciples for Jesus Christ (the process of faith development), and building new faith communities are definitely the will of God, and therefore, it must become the primary task of the Church today. John Wesley argued that growth was definitely a sign of God’s grace, and decline was a sign of decrease in God’s grace. The central or the primary task of God’s people then, is to make known the essential facts of the Good News, that Jesus Christ died for all persons, and that there is salvation and new life in Christ Jesus, and intentionally disciple and grow persons within the context of faith communities — the Body of Christ.

The theological base on which revitalization and new church development can take place is to perceive the church as an agent of outreach and reconciliation, and also, to perceive the church as faithful to our Lord’s command to go and make new disciples and build new faith communities. In Matthew 28.18-19 Jesus’ own words commands: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the very end of the age.” Growing the church and creating new faith communities is truly being faithful to the Great Commission. Ultimately, it is faithfulness to God.

It is important to keep in mind that churches exist not only to help and nurture Christians, but also to give believers a “center” of operation from which to consistently launch intentional ministries of reaching the lost and to invite persons into the fellowship of the Body of Christ. The primary purpose for the existence and mission of the church is to boldly spread the power of the Gospel, to make new disciples, and to engage in the expansion of the kingdom of God by building new faith communities throughout the world.

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There are basically three reasons why growth and expansion of the church of God is a necessity:

- 1) The church of God is a living organism. It is alive and full of life from God. Every living thing grows and expands.... The only thing that can cause that which was once growing to abruptly stop growing is a process of death. God dislikes death; God overcame death. God is the giver of life and life more abundant. There is no sadder sight than that of a dying church or denomination. Renewal and expansion of the church in and through the power of the Holy Spirit is its only hope.
- 2) The church itself definitely needs to grow, expand and spread. There is nothing more joyous to see and experience than growth itself, both spiritual and numerical. To see men, women and children being brought to the saving knowledge of Christ and incorporated into new faith communities sustains much excitement.
- 3) The world has no hope for hearing the Gospel except through God's divinely ordered medium, which is the Body of Christ, the faith community of believers. The responsibility of spreading the Good News to every person on earth and expanding the Body of Christ has been clearly given to the Church — to every disciple of Christ.

### Conclusion

The Scripture, of course, has ample examples and illustrations from Genesis to Revelation of a God who 1) seeks; 2) saves; 3) finds; 4) restores; 5) enables growth; and 6) builds. Therefore, God calls for the faithful people of His church to follow Him in this task of seeking, saving, finding, restoring, growing, and building God's kingdom. God's objective is to not only proclaim, but also to gather together the results of the proclamation; to build, expand and grow the church of God through the formation of new faith communities. God is well pleased when the church grows, expands, multiplies and prospers; this brings glory and honor to God. The power and strength for this all-important divine task comes from God the Holy Spirit. Without His empowerment, we can do nothing!

## Why Start New Churches?

By Scott Ray, Senior Minister, Sugarloaf United Methodist Church

The earliest years of the Methodism were marked by a passion for God and a commitment to bring people to faith in Christ. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, is often quoted as saying, "Give me 100 preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergy or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the Kingdom of Heaven on earth." Wesley not only had a passion for reaching lost people, but he was also a thorough ministry strategist. He developed a strategy for outreach and discipleship, constantly observed classes, societies, towns, hecklers, detractors, leaders, parish churches, persons and crowds. He insisted that the ministry be practical, meet the needs of the people and encourage indigenous ministries in the multiplication of units. He believed in seed planting by sharing the Good News and allowing people to think about it before they were challenged to accept Christ and intentionally sought to reach people across social networks.<sup>1</sup>

As we seek to reach future generations, Wesley's strategies form a solid foundation to build upon, however, the current state of the United Methodist Church insists, "we must heed the warning signs and move to reclaim the flame of Methodism's early passion."<sup>2</sup>

### A Brief History

In order to gain a proper perspective on strategies for the future, one should start by looking at the trends shaped by the past. In 1820, the Methodists and Baptists formed the largest religious bodies in America, each reporting some twenty-seven hundred churches. At this time, there was one religious congregation for every 875 of the 9.6 million residents of this new nation. By the beginning of the Civil War, the population had grown to more than thirty million and the number of churches were growing at an even faster pace, numbering fifty-four thousand in 1860. This growth "produced a ratio of one congregation for every six hundred residents"<sup>3</sup>—a figure that remained largely unchanged for the next 130 years.<sup>3</sup>

Starting new faith communities was the primary strategy that accounted for this incredible growth. Then, as now, new faith communities struggled to survive.

Many were born every day, but a substantial proportion did not survive for as long as a decade, and the life expectancy of scores of new congregations was counted in weeks or months, not years. At least one third, and probably closer to one-half of those 54,000 churches in existence in 1860 were not around to be counted in the census of religious bodies taken in 1906.<sup>4</sup>

In the midst of these difficult times, the Methodist movement continued to flourish. At the time of the 1906 census of religious communities in America, the number of Methodist Churches alone had surpassed the total of all churches in the nation that existed in 1860. The incredible impact of new church development on the religious scene in America is seen in the fact that, "of the 212,230 religious bodies counted in 1906, at least one-half was less than thirty years old."<sup>5</sup> Between 1899 and 1906 the population increased by nine million and at least 32,000 new churches were organized – an average of one new congregation for every increase of 280 in the population.<sup>6</sup> Church planting was simply the rule of the day and the means by which every major religious body in America grew throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

By contrast, the later part of the twentieth century was marked by a sharp decline in the planting of new congregations. On the national scene, "during the 1980s the population of the United States increased by twenty-four million, and the number of churches increased by an estimated thirtyfive thousand or one additional religious body for every 685 net increase in the population."<sup>7</sup>

Lyle Schaller notes, however, "a more sobering picture develops when we observe the six predecessor denominations of today's United Methodist Church. This group organized a combined total of 7,395 new congregations in the 1880's, compared to 700 new churches in the 1980's."<sup>8</sup>

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This summary of the development of religious groups in America indicates that the main line denominations experienced their “peak efforts in organizing new churches” in the fifty-year period between the Civil War and World War I.<sup>9</sup> What accounts for this dramatic shift in focus on new church development?

### Two Basic Strategies

By taking a brief look at church history in America, two strategies for reaching new generations clearly emerge. The first strategy, as noted above, was to form hundreds of thousands of new churches. The second primary strategy became the normal means of church growth in the first seventy years of the twentieth century was to increase the size of the average congregation.<sup>10</sup>

As Schaller notes, this strategy is problematic for two reasons:

The first problem is the second law of thermodynamics which, when translated into institutional terms, states that sooner or later everything runs down. Thus the normal and predictable pattern is for congregations to gradually shrink in size.

Second, new churches are more likely to reach more people and grow in size than long-established parishes. Perhaps the simplest explanation of this pattern is that new congregations are organized around evangelism and reaching people not actively involved in the life of any worshipping community. By contrast, powerful internal institutional pressures tend to encourage long established churches to allocate most of their resources to the care of members.<sup>11</sup>

The Methodist Church provides a clear example of the negative impact of focusing on this second strategy of reaching new people through focusing on the growth of existing congregations. United Methodist congregational development leaders, Steve Compton and G. Steven Salle note,

For more than two centuries in this country, “church growth” meant starting new congregations. By contrast, for most mainline denominations over the past forty years, church growth has meant trying to increase the membership of existing congregations. In the same period, the creation of new congregations has been nearly nonexistent. The effect of this situation on the ability of the church to incorporate this nation’s burgeoning population of unchurched people into the life of Christ and into the ministry of the church has been devastating.<sup>12</sup>

Compton and Salle note this change in church growth philosophy was mainly a product of cultural trends. In the time period leading up to World War II, “congregations located in rural areas were largely self-perpetuating; their new membership came from the repopulation of essentially stable kinship communities.”<sup>13</sup>

However, the post war culture encouraged a major movement of people to urban areas. The results of this move were twofold. The explosive growth of existing churches in urban areas seemed to make the starting of new congregations unnecessary. Also, in declining rural communities, it made little sense to start new churches as others were declining.<sup>14</sup> The end result was a downward spiral in the membership of the United Methodist Church. In 1988, Bishop Richard Wilke of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church clearly summed up the crisis:

Each year, the denomination declines 65,000 to 80,000, each week or an estimated 1470 members. This amounts to about six “average” 250 member churches a week. This means membership has gone from having 11 million members in the 1960s to 10 million members in the 1970s to 9 million members in the 1980s, to the now 8 million member category in the 1990s.<sup>15</sup>

The past fifteen years have done little to reverse this alarming trend. Take a look at the warning signs.

### Warning Signs

After four decades of decline, it is important to get a picture of how the United Methodist Church exists today. The General Board of Global Ministries web publication Background Data for Mission and two recent congregational life surveys conducted by the Office of Research and Planning for the General Council on Ministries provide important and current insights into the state of United Methodism. The following five sections serve as a sampling of the challenges facing the United Methodist Church at the dawn of this new millennium.

- for pastors starting new churches
- for churches starting new churches
- for resourcing our newest churches

## Congregation Size

The United Methodist Church has lost members every year since the merger of 1968. The January 2002 Background Data for Mission report makes the following observations:

In 1999-2000, the average church size of 231 members remained the same as the previous year as did the percentage of attendance to membership, at only 42%. The average attendance per church has remained unchanged over the past several years at 97.16

These average membership and worship attendance numbers do not necessarily paint a hopeful picture. In reality, most Methodist congregations are much smaller. The report concludes, "Half of all United Methodist churches have membership of 113 or less and attendance of 53 or less."<sup>17</sup>

## Congregation Age

The average age of worshippers are on the rise throughout the nation, however, the United Methodist Church is "already gray." The congregational life survey, "Who Attends United Methodist Churches?," conducted by the Office of Research and Planning makes the following observations:

For every young adult under twenty-five years old, there are six senior citizens. In fact, there are almost twice as many senior citizens occupying United Methodist pews than there are adults aged twenty-five to forty-four. In typical congregations, those aged forty-five to sixty-four make up the largest group.<sup>18</sup>

The survey concludes, "If a denomination's future rests upon the shoulder's of the young, then The United Methodist Church must intensify its efforts to attract and involve young adults who currently make up the smallest portion of its population."<sup>19</sup>

## Household Type

A significant warning sign to note is that in United Methodist congregations across the country, only four in ten United Methodist worshippers have children living at home. This is a full 25% below the national average. The people filling United Methodist pews are most likely to be women, well educated, and aged forty-five years or older.<sup>20</sup>

## Worship Styles

Several recent surveys have sought to gather not only factual information about Methodist worship styles, but also the personal feelings, preferences and experiences of the people in the pew. The General Board of Global Ministries' Office of Research notes that when compared to the typical U.S. congregation, "Methodist worshippers were three times as likely to be bored, and one-eighth as likely to experience awe or mystery in worship."<sup>21</sup> The congregational life survey, *Myths about Worshippers and Congregations*, further found that 78% of Methodists value traditional hymns, but less than half of church attenders under 40 prefer traditional hymns.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the Office of Research and Planning found, "the typical U.S. congregation is more than twice as likely to use an electric guitar/bass to enhance their worship services as are United Methodist congregations."<sup>23</sup>

## Congregational Vitality

Congregational vitality may, more than any other area of study, provide the most sobering picture of United Methodism. The Office of Research and Planning's "Do You Know How We See Ourselves?" survey states that United Methodists are half as likely as the typical congregation to strongly agree that their congregations are spiritually vital and alive. And they are more than twice as likely to report their lack of confidence in their congregations' spiritual vitality.<sup>24</sup>

This lack of confidence in spiritual vitality, "transfers to their being only half as likely as the typical U.S. congregation to strongly agree that their congregation helps to deepen their relationship with God."<sup>25</sup> The survey concludes, United Methodists lack the joyous optimism that characterizes nearly one third of congregations nationwide. Their excitement is perhaps not so much absent, as it is tempered by caution and confusion. Less than half of United Methodist respondents report confidence in their congregation's sense of mission and purpose.<sup>26</sup>

The United Methodist Church is in trouble. The move away from planting new congregations coupled with the decline of existing congregations has left the denomination ill-prepared to meet the challenge of reaching a new generation. Methodism is shrinking and aging at a rate far surpassing other U.S. Churches. Their pews are not filled with the next generation of young people. The worship styles and music preferences are more in keeping with past generations, and congregational vitality does not provide a hopeful picture for the future. Where do we go from here?

### The Primary Need: Start New Churches

In the midst of overwhelming warning signs, there is a glimmer of hope. The summary figures presented in March 2000's Background Data for Mission states that the difference between growth and decline for many conferences throughout the denomination has been the practice of starting new congregations.<sup>27</sup> For example,

Missouri West showed an attendance increase of 2,906 between 1989 and 1998, with 3,438 in attendance at churches that were chartered during that period. Had these churches not been chartered, an attendance loss would have occurred. Other conferences where new church attendance accounts for an overall increase include Mississippi, Oklahoma, Desert Southwest, and Louisiana. Many more conferences have a large percentage of increase comprised of attendance in new churches.<sup>28</sup>

Herein lies what may well be the key to future growth in the United Methodist Church – the planting of new churches!

#### Footnotes:

- 1 "The Incubator Guidebook" (a training manual for New Church Pastors in the Kentucky Conference of the United Methodist Church), p. 1.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Lyle E. Schaller, *44 Questions for Church Planters* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), p. 15.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid., p. 16.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid., p. 17.
- 8 Ibid., p. 17-18.
- 9 Ibid., p. 18.
- 10 Ibid., p. 21.
- 11 Ibid., p. 23-23.
- 12 Stephen C. Compton and G. Steven Salle, *Growing New Churches* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1992), p. vii.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Richard Wilke, *Signs and Wonders* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), p. 16.
- 16 The Office of Research of The General Board of Global Ministries, "Conference Data Comparisons: 1999-2000," *Background Data for Mission*, Volume 14, No.1 (January 2002), p.1.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 The Office of Research and Planning of the General Council on Ministries, *Do You Know Who Attends United Methodist Churches* (Dayton, OH: The Office of Research and Planning), p. 11.
- 19 Ibid., p. 13.
- 20 Ibid., pp.11-13.
- 21 The Office of Research of The General Board of Global Ministries, "The American Church," *Background Data for Mission*, Volume 14, No. 5 (May 2002): 2.
- 22 "Myths About Worshippers and Congregations," *Congregational Life Survey*.
- 23 The Office of Research and Planning of the General Council on Ministries, *Do You Know How We See Ourselves?* (Dayton, OH: The Office of Research and Planning), p. 3.
- 24 Ibid., p.4
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid., p. 9.
- 27 The Office of Research of The General Board of Global Ministries, "Reverse Conference Decline: Start New Churches!," *Background Data for Mission*, Volume 12, No. 4 (April 2000), p. 1.
- 28 Ibid.



# Part Two: The Ministry of New Church Development

## The Role of the Episcopal Office in Starting New Churches

by Bishop William W. Dew, The Desert Southwest Annual Conference

The establishment of new faith communities with the goal of becoming chartered churches and the vitalization of existing congregations are two effective means whereby annual conferences fulfill the vision of making disciples for Jesus Christ in the 21st century. Bishops have gleaned and experienced many strategies for implementing visions of new future churches throughout their ministry

prior to becoming bishops. As episcopal leaders they are in unique positions to join with the leadership of an annual conference in establishing a vision, a strategic plan, and financial undergirding of resources to accomplish significant development within their area. All bishops share some skills and ideas in common in this arena, but they also have different thoughts about which is the best leadership method for an annual conference.

The following are some thoughts about leadership and some key steps that each episcopal leader should consider.

Attempt to develop a leadership style that maximizes participation of as many people as appropriate so that the ownership of a new vision is wide-spread and understood by as many people as possible.

The best administrators seldom “tell” their staff what to do, but rather provide a creative climate and utilize processes that enable people to discover for themselves the most effective ways to accomplish their goals and priorities. Decentralization, freedom and participative democratic procedures allow for the maximum involvement of people who provide leadership in an annual conference.

A first step in an annual conference is to hold gatherings of laity and clergy to address the questions of what should be done to fulfill our gospel mandate and to address the human needs of people who are moving into our communities. The use of demographic data is vital to this enterprise of gathering data. Above all, the episcopal leader must demonstrate that he/she is committed to listening to the people at these gatherings.

Another step is to recruit highly effective motivated clergy and laity, the “best” pastors and the “best” laity, to serve on a leadership team that accepts the challenge of shaping the vision that will be placed before the annual conference.

Once the vision is agreed upon by the leadership team, then all of the constituencies of the annual conference must be given opportunities to gain ownership of the vision and the priorities that flow from the vision.

When this is accomplished the episcopal leader makes clear that moving toward the vision and being guided by the priorities are two important responsibilities he or she has in the conference. This is accomplished by including these commitments in preaching, teaching and administration throughout the conference.

The episcopal leader, along with the extended cabinet (district superintendents and other connectional ministry personnel), work together as a team to demonstrate the power of the collaborative approach to leadership. The extended cabinet understands that it exists to serve the congregations and the mission of the conference and not vice versa.

A designated staff position giving leadership to congregational development and new congregation location and support is vital. The episcopal leader must have 100% confidence in the person who fills this position.

It is necessary for the district superintendents and the congregational development person to identify, train, equip, support and strategically place persons who are being asked to start new faith communities.

Annual Conference budgets usually do not have sufficient resources within their parameters on an annual basis to support the work of starting new faith communities and the vitalizing of existing congregations. A financial plan needs to be developed and presented to the annual conference for the completion of the vision for the future. Finally, and most importantly, the episcopal leader should be willing to be the key leader of the financial campaign and be willing to make it a top priority for the first year of the campaign. I believe that the episcopal leader should be willing to attempt to raise at least 50% of the financial goal of a campaign by requesting lead gifts and major gifts of individuals and foundations.

In summary, the office of the episcopal leader is the key component that provides leadership for the success of establishing new faith communities and the vitalization of existing congregations within the annual conference in making Disciples for Jesus Christ in the 21st century.

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## The Role of the District Superintendent in Starting New Churches

by Rev. Tom Butcher

Dir. of Faith Communities, The Desert Southwest Annual Conference

The establishment of new churches, with the goal of becoming chartered, is one of the most effective means of evangelization in the 21st century. This has been true in United Methodism since the time of John Wesley. The role of the district superintendent is vital in fulfilling the mandate to make Disciples of Jesus Christ.

The district superintendents' responsibility for starting new churches is made clear in the 2000 Book of Discipline. Paragraph 259, Section VII, The Method of Organizing a new local church states the following:

A new local church or mission congregation shall be established only with the consent of the bishop in charge and the Cabinet and with due consideration of the Conference entity assigned the responsibility for congregational development. The district superintendent of that district, or his or her designee, shall be the agent in charge of the project and shall recommend to the District Board of Church Location and Building the method of organization, and whether a specific site shall be selected or an area of organization be designated. The district superintendent shall avail him/herself of existing demographic, lifestyle and ethnographic information in the process of establishing a new congregation and its location, or shall recommend to the Board of Trustees of a selected local church that they share their facility with the proposed congregation. If there is a city or district missionary organization, or if funds for the project are anticipated from a Conference organization; those bodies shall also be asked to approve the method of organization and location for a new congregation.

Therefore, the district superintendent is the main supervisory person for any new church start and the pastor that is appointed.

More and more annual conferences are designating a staff person to provide leadership to congregational development and new church starts. It is necessary for the district superintendents and the new church start staff person to work together to identify, train, equip, support and strategically place persons who are being asked to start new faith communities. However, the Discipline is clear that the district superintendent is responsible for supervising the new church start pastor. The new church starts staff person can be very helpful in the mentoring process.

An important aspect in helping district superintendents to start new churches is the development of a strategic plan for the entire Annual Conference. An intentional and coordinated effort involving all the districts will both focus and maximize the resources that are needed. If the Annual Conference does not have a strategic plan for beginning new faith communities, the district superintendent, with the support of the bishop, can be a catalyst for the development of such a plan.

It is also imperative that the district superintendent take the initiative in developing a district strategic plan for starting new churches. This means there is a vital need to have a "passion" for beginning new faith communities. Clay Jacobs, Director for the Office of Church Development of the North Georgia Conference, has put it this way, "If you don't have a passion for starting new churches, you need to get it!" The understanding here is that beginning new faith communities is the most effective method today of making new disciples for Jesus Christ. Also, the district superintendent knows where the need is. Nobody knows the district better than

the D.S.; where the growth is taking place and where the emerging ethnic, language, generational and cultural groups are located that need to be reached in fresh, new, creative and exciting ways. Develop a keen eye when looking at these areas to see just where a new faith community might be planted. Then study those areas with your District Board of Church Location and Building Committee and together form a plan!

As a district superintendent, it is crucial in providing leadership and inspiration for the entire district to support the new church start. To be sure, there will be those pastors and churches within your district that feel “no new churches are needed in their area.” However, it is most difficult for new churches to survive without the total support of every church in the district. District support for a new church start can come in a variety of ways. Cash is always helpful and usually the most needed. The new fellowships need dollars to rent facilities; advertise; hire staff; and develop missions. Laity serving as “missionaries” can be very helpful in the launch of a new church start. Usually these folks are sent out for six months to a year from other existing churches from within the district. A new video projector with a computer, screen and new sound system can make all the difference in the world. Making the new church start a District Advance and Mission special greatly improves the new church start’s success.

It has been stated that the most important factor in the success of a new church start is leadership. As a district superintendent, realization that it is critical to give your very best pastors to these appointments is imperative. Starting a new church is about the hardest task we ask our pastors are asked to do. Therefore, an invitation to the ministry must be given to the most talented pastors. Perhaps only 10% of the pastors in any given district are able to grow a new church through their gifts, graces and passions. Even though a number of churches in the district would benefit from such leadership; the mission field, however, now surrounds us and for the sake of the Kingdom identification of these pastors, training them and using them to plant new churches must be the first priority.

The district superintendent needs to understand that there are several models available for starting new churches. Some persons may indicate that there is only one way to do this successfully. This is not true. Additional new successful models are being discovered every day and there is a high learning curve when it comes to talking about how we start new faith communities and how to develop them into chartered churches.

Finally, the district superintendent must be willing to energetically encourage new church start pastors. While the Book of Discipline states that the district superintendent is the primary supervisor of this pastor, he/she also needs to be his/her biggest cheerleader! Giving birth to a new faith community is one of the loneliest tasks in all of ministry. Keep in close contact with each new church pastor and make sure they take care of themselves and their families. Make sure also that the new church pastor remains United Methodist, and that they have a mentor and/or a coach.

It is very gratifying to watch each district grow and become stronger because the district superintendent is willing to start new churches with their best leadership in areas where the Good News of Jesus Christ is most needed.



## Role of Conference Staff

By Dick Freeman

The Discipline of the United Methodist Church clearly recognizes a conference level position to direct conference efforts in new church development and congregational development. Section 259.1 reads, "A new local church or mission congregation shall be established only with the consent of the bishop in charge and the cabinet and with due consideration of the conference entity assigned the responsibility for congregational development."

To be effective, new church development or congregational development must be a full time position in the Annual Conference. It is helpful for the position to be cabinet level or part of the extended cabinet as much of the long range planning for new church development involves leadership development and clergy appointments.

The director of congregational development is the major conference advocate for new church development with the bishop and cabinet. The position may have an additional portfolio in revitalization of existing congregations. The dual portfolio gives the director of congregational development access to every church in the Annual Conference. Directly connecting the congregational development function with every church in the Annual Conference allows the director to establish widespread support for new church development. Furthermore, strong established churches often serve as the launching pad for new churches.

In addition to being the major conference advocate for new church development, the director of congregational development is the primary fund-raiser for new church development. In this capacity, the director of congregational development may direct the efforts of a New Church Builders team or perhaps a "Team 1000" composed of 100-200 members who each give at least \$1000 per year to support new church development. The office of congregational development will mail one or two call letters per year to each member of the New Church Builders team, or "Team 1000," and provide a newsletter to keep the team participants informed on conference issues impacting new church development as well as reporting how the money is used. The director of congregational development must strive to have new church development become an apportionment priority in the Annual Conference. Apportioned giving is the most reliable source of continuing financial support for new church development in the United Methodist connectional system. If new church development is not a direct apportionment it may be a conference special asking or, at a minimum, an advance special.

New church development must become endowed as soon as possible and the director of congregational development must raise endowment funds and manage the funds through a conference foundation or some other non-taxable entity. In the early stages of an endowment, the capital fund should be allowed to grow with only the interest available to support the office of congregational development. As the capital fund increases, low interest loans to new church plants may be made directly from the capital fund.

In some Annual Conferences, local church properties may, from time to time, be abandoned or discontinued. Directors of congregational development must work with the bishop and district superintendents to ensure that proceeds from the sale of the property of abandoned or discontinued churches are used to plant new churches, even when the new church is not in the same district as the abandoned or discontinued church. Directors of congregational development must encourage districts to enter into joint venture arrangements in which funds from two or more districts may be pooled to help finance new church plants.

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New church development is clearly a conference level activity. The director must have access to knowledge of the entire conference including detailed demographic data on the conference. The congregational development office must establish relationships with public utilities and state, county and municipal governmental agencies as well as local school systems. Such agencies are helpful in projecting residential and commercial growth. The information provided is essential in determining fertile areas for new church planting. Congregational development staff must have access to the latest demographic data regarding the Annual Conference. Demographic data may be obtained from the General Board of Global Ministries or from commercial providers such as Percept, Inc. Up-to-date demographic data and two to five year demographic projections are essential in new church planting, as well as in assisting established congregations identify the indigenous populations in their service areas. Current data and projections are particularly helpful in geographic areas of significant cultural and economic transition.

Congregational development staff must establish and maintain relationships with banks, real estate agents and brokers, architects, construction companies and lawyers. Parsonages must be acquired for new church pastors, or where housing allowances are the practice, new church pastors need assistance in finding affordable housing in the area of the new church plant. In situations where existing housing is not available, houses must be built. Many pastors have never bought or built a house and, therefore need assistance in home acquisition or construction. In some cases, rental houses may be appropriate. Renting should always be temporary and used only until adequate housing can be purchased or constructed. As the new congregation develops, space for worship and educational activities must be rented. Storefronts, schools and shopping centers are alternatives worthy of consideration. Later, when the congregation is ready, large tracts of land for the new church must be acquired and buildings planned, financed and constructed.

Leadership in the area of Congregational Development is critical to the success of both new church development and renewal of existing congregations. Congregational development staff must provide training opportunities for new church pastors and lay leaders. Some opportunities may be provided by the conference while others may be provided by general church agencies or other agencies providing training. There are many "teaching churches" around the country that offer a great variety of training in areas such as worship planning and discipleship processes, staff development, and mission and ministry outside the walls of the church. The General Board of Discipleship School of Congregational Development is an excellent training opportunity. Many conferences are offering Academies for Congregational Development that may be tailored to the specific needs of the particular conference and its personnel. Such academies demonstrate commitment by the conference in the area of Congregational Development. Furthermore, there are many for-profit entities and professional trainers available to present training for an Annual Conference. In the area of new church planting, organizations such as Church Multiplication Training Center, Easum-Bandy Associates, and Net Results, offer quality training. It is the responsibility of the conference office of congregational development to stay abreast of training opportunities for those who are starting new churches, as well as those who desire to find the next steps for existing churches.

The position of Director of Congregational Development requires a variety of skills and spiritual gifts. It requires a clear vision for reaching people for the Lord Jesus Christ. Anyone who aspires to fill the position must be willing to stay in the position long enough to establish a variety of networks. Through networking, the director of congregational development can greatly expand, not only the influence of the Annual Conference, but also the effectiveness of the office of congregational development. The greatness of the United Methodist connectional system resides in a willingness to make the connection work and produce positive results for the Annual Conference. Effective ministry in the Postmodern Age is relational and experiential. The effective director of congregational development must have a deep spiritual desire to reach postmodern generations. The future of United Methodism depends on our ability to reach those people who will lead the Church in the Twenty-first Century.

## Developing a Comprehensive Conference Strategy for New Church Development

By George Howard; Director of Leadership and Learning, West Ohio Conference

Traditionally, new churches are planted through the decision-making processes of a district superintendent or small group within the conference. While the Book of Discipline places the responsibility with the district superintendent, the catalyzing of a movement can open new doors and empower people to dream and to participate. The igniting of people's energy & passion will release new ideas and resources. A movement by its definition is not controlled, nor does it fit within a predetermined framework of systems and structures. A movement however is what we are called to evoke in order that we think differently, reach different groups of people and transform our communities, counties and world.

There are three stages of building a movement across a district and Annual Conference: The Invitation and Development of a Core Team, Proclaiming a Vision, and Discerning District and Conference Strategies. This is a long-range process and requires patience, prayer and persistence.

**The Invitation:** See also following pages

- Identify a few people across the conference that a) are committed to evangelism and outreach, b) have demonstrated leadership skills, c) will focus their efforts beyond the local church, and d) will commit to develop & lead a training program (New Church Start Academy.)
- Involve the cabinet in identifying gifted leaders who might benefit from specialized training to start or restart churches.
- Establish an ongoing training initiative to Identify, Equip & Empower spiritual leaders to plant new churches.
- Trust in God that if you aid people in connecting them with Gods call in their life, and affirm and empower them to live into that call there will be a ripple effect helping to birth a movement.

### Cultivating Pilot Ministries

- Cultivate relationships with the conference board responsible for church revitalization and new church development.
- Claim a bold vision for a measurable number of new churches and restarts for the next five years.
- Assist Academy graduates and District leadership to identify locations for new church starts, satellite ministries, and worship services targeted at new populations.
- Make the graduates of the Academy a priority and encourage and enable them in applying what they have learned. These new churches then become teaching sites for other churches in the district and conference.
- Incorporate the graduates of the New Church Start Academy on District Strategy Teams, District

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Leadership Teams and the relevant Conference Board. (Those who are not initiating new ministries only.)

- Continue to work with district superintendents and the cabinet to place New Church Start pastors and proclaim the vision of Reaching New Populations for Christ.

#### **Discerning District & Conference Strategies** - See also following pages

- Assist district superintendents with the selection criteria for District Strategy Team members.
- Develop a relationship with District Strategy chairs and the cabinet.
- Share existing district strategies from other districts and other conferences as examples.
- Acquire and interpret demographic information.
- Assist District Strategy committees in designing their two year initiative to call forth and discern their District Strategy.
- Invite District Strategy representatives to form a conference study/writing team to discern conference strategies based upon district reports.

#### **The Invitation**

Given that the call and leading of God is the most significant resource for a new church start, the second resource is the quality of leadership brought to the project. It is the task of the New Church Start Academy to be that process for developing leadership for several church starts in the conference. To fulfill this vision, the Church Extension Ministry area of the Conference and the Conference Staff must work together to design the curriculum for the initiative. The goal and mission of the academy is to train and mentor leadership for church starts. Several models exist including West Ohio, Iowa, & North Alabama.

The Academy will combine several elements to prepare leadership to be able to evaluate a potential church start community and to be aware of a variety of culturally relevant outreach models. Participants will develop a strategy for church growth and know how to use small groups and other tools to support that growth with meaningful spiritual vitality in the new congregation. An understanding of the financial realities in a new church and what roles the extended church might play in their support is important. The leadership should be able to articulate a vision for building churches that seek excellence in calling God's people into a personal relationship with Jesus and; acting in ways that express the love of God through authentic missions to the community.

The two-year academy involves visiting four "mentoring or teaching sites" a year (eight visits over two years). In preparation for each visit, participants will have required reading assignments that will be discussed and reviewed at the on-site visit. The visit will be from Thursday noon through Friday noon and will involve a variety of learning experiences. Complementing these sessions will be one extended session each year such as the School of Congregational Development.

#### **Goals for the Academy should include:**

- Equipping of leaders with both knowledge and skill to move them towards successful church starts.
- Awareness of available resources for the new church start initiation.
- Preparation of pastors for a variety of start-up situations.
- Discernment of calling to be a church planter.
- Knowledge of persons and their specific call in order to assist the cabinet with recommendations when necessary.

**This will require:**

- Recruiting candidates to the program that fit a new church start profile.
- Designing a curriculum and calendar for working through the process.
- Spotlight and build upon the successes you have within the conference.
- Choose Mentoring/Teaching sites to use as locations for meeting and learning.
- Developing a reading list to enhance the curriculum and discussions.
- Investigate seminars beyond the conference which will complement the training and add depth in specific arenas.
- Providing recommendations to the Cabinet which match candidates and new church starts.

**Discerning District & Conference Strategies.**

The lay and clergy leadership in each district identifies efforts that evoke and articulate a vision and strategies for living into that vision. It is important that a strategy is developed on a district level that includes both new church starts and existing church revitalization efforts. Each district will be in a slightly different place, and leaders within the district should be encouraged to experiment with different approaches.

The Conference Leadership task is first to encourage the diversity in approaches to answering common questions and the use of common definitions. Secondly, it is to be a resource to Districts as they seek to discern God's will for their ministry. Finally, it is to identify Conference Strategies based upon the District Strategies.

Results of these efforts will be evident conference-wide by Annual Conference in the first year. Over the second year, the conference will assist districts in developing a written strategy that will:

- be able to project what will be different in five years as a result of their efforts.
- have a time line reflecting the initiation of strategic ministries.
- engage lay and clergy leadership in various levels of visioning, planning & exploration of their mission field.
- empower lay and clergy to take risks in their ministry. (Some will fail to accomplish what they set out to do. This is a part of being willing to risk.)

The purpose is to cast a vision, which is inviting and transformative for each District, and the Annual Conference. The vision is supported by a written plan that takes into account the current reality of the population, the churches, and the leadership. This plan identifies churches/areas which are strategic to the plan due to their location, leadership, and/or readiness. It also identifies priority concerns or initiatives. The detail will include recommendations for New Church Starts, Revitalizations, Mergers, Relocations and Church Partnerships.

**District Method - District Strategy Team Responsibility**

There are several essential tasks or functions that the District Strategy Team needs to accomplish in order to cast a compelling vision for making disciples while developing a viable plan for implementation.

- Engage in significant research: Study demographic data and long range planning materials from various governmental and business sources.
- Share throughout the district the unfolding vision for making disciples that is being set by vision champions in the Conference.
- Draw forth from local churches their emerging dreams for the future and their plans for moving into these visions.

- Study and pray over all of this information. Work together as a team to discern the compelling vision for the district's preferred future five years from now.
- Use this vision to develop a written strategic plan that will lead you from your current reality to the preferred future.
- Share this written strategic plan across your district and incorporate suggested changes.
- Organize and deploy Mission Teams to work in each of the strategic locations that have been identified.
- Present the written strategy to the Conference Writing Team.

Year 1, Quarter 1:

- Outline of approach and time line the district will pursue.
- Identification of new ministries for next three years.
- Initial identification of strategic locations.

Year 1, Quarter 3:

- Refinement of district's approach and time line for a comprehensive strategy.
- Draft of a written strategy including anticipated results.

Year 2, Quarter 2:

- Five year district plan including provision for ongoing analysis and revision.

Each District strategy team needs to determine how it will accomplish these several tasks. Some tasks may already have been completed while others may be currently underway. Each district strategy team should set its own time line and approaches to accomplish the overall goals.

The Research Team studies the demographics provided by Conference and shares that data with regional planning bodies, including school systems, to decide if a more detailed study is required. Field teams then prepare to present the information to church leaders.

A Field Team may be an extension of the Research Team or another group altogether. They receive training from the Research Team including interpretation of the demographics and outline of the emerging vision for the District and Conference. Afterward, they present the information to all of the churches in the district and engage them in a dialogue around strategy. This may include expansion of existing ministries, new ministries, or new partnerships with other churches.

The field teams may visit the church once or have a series of visits. The first visit will be to listen to how the church leaders describe their current reality, including where they are going. The second to present the demographics and the core process. The third could be a visioning/planning session.

Scenario A: Teams of two (lay/clergy or lay/lay) are sent to each church in the district. They describe the demographics of the area and see what the church is doing with regard to the core process. They also engage the leadership in a conversation around the church's vision and how it relates to the emerging vision of the district and conference. No team should visit more than five churches.

Scenario B: The team holds cluster or regional meetings providing the demographic information. This allows for the churches in the same area to be in some dialogue with each other regarding the current reality, emerging vision, and ways of working cooperatively. There should be at least one team member for each church represented.

Scenario C: A series of sermons are preached over a four week period in each church. A planning consultant from the district is assigned to the church to help them discern the current reality and focus for their efforts. Then a consultant with experience in that part of the core process is assigned to help the church think through what it will actually do.

Regardless of the approach, the Field Teams report to the Research Team with their impressions of the conversations. Presentation skills, listening skills and ability to represent the district are important attributes for members of the Field Team.

The Research Team receives information from the field team regarding the church's initiatives and responses to the community demographics and the emerging vision. Together with the demographics, these are analyzed and recommendations made regarding strategic areas.

Mission Teams are established. One is set up for each of the identified strategic areas or "hot spots." Representatives from the churches surrounding the strategic area are invited to develop the Mission Team and explore the potential for a New Church, New Ministry, Revitalization, or New Partnerships among two or more area churches.

The Research Team continues to develop an overall district strategy regarding both strategic initiatives and broader priority concerns. Since this is an ongoing process, the Mission Teams will continue their work over time, and the Research Team will continue their dialogue with them.

A Writing Team is actually a sub-committee of the Research Team assigned to capture the current thinking. They receive the information from the full Research Team and organize it into two reports. The first report includes a compilation of impressions and intuitions of leadership readiness

and hoped for results which will be a working document for the Strategy Committee. It will include time lines and budgets for implementing the strategy. The second report is a shorter document that may have a wider circulation. It forms the basis for a brochure or booklet that will not only serve as a report to the district, but will also begin to cast a district vision and encourage implementation. Additionally, the second report is the basis for a report for the Conference Strategy Team which includes a prioritization of initiatives across the District.

### Conference Method

A Research Team studies the demographics from a conference perspective. They assist the District Research Team in understanding the demographics available from the conference wide study. They also assist them in discerning implications for the District Field Teams.

The Conference Research Team receives the District Strategy Reports regarding their strategic locations, broad initiatives, and their emerging vision. Together with the demographics, these reports are analyzed and recommendations are made regarding an overall conference strategy.

A Writing Team receives the information from the Conference Research Team and organizes it into two reports. The first includes a compilation of impressions and intuitions of leadership readiness and hoped for results. This will be a working document for the Conference Strategy Committee. It will include time lines and budgets for implementing the strategy. The second is a shorter document that may have a wider circulation. It forms the basis for a brochure or booklet, which will serve as a report to the Annual Conference spelling out the vision and encouraging implementation. This Writing Team should be comprised of 3-4 people from the Research Team. This team needs people who see patterns and are able to write well with a working knowledge of the conference.



## Recruitment, Assessment, Training and Deployment of New Church Pastors

By Jim Griffith and Don Nations, The Griffith Coaching Network



The process through which new church pastors are recruited, assessed, trained and deployed determines the success or failure of any church planting system. The goal of an effective church planting system is to attract high quality candidates, clearly identify their strengths and patterns of behavior, develop their skill sets and assign them to a context in which they have an affinity for the target population. Taken together, these are the components for the foundation for starting strong, vital faith communities.

### Attracting High Quality Candidates

A system that embodies the following characteristics increases the probability that it will attract high quality candidates for starting new faith communities:

- Denominational leaders are conversant with church planting literature.
- Significant funding is invested in new church starts.
- Multiple strategies for starting new churches are pursued.
- There is a history of successful new church starts by the system.
- An investment is made in the training of prospective church planters.
- Planters receive on-going training and coaching after starting the project.
- The assessment, training and deployment system is clearly defined.
- Recruitment efforts are consistent and on-going.

### Assessment

“Most church planters are marginal at best.” By this it is meant that most of the prospective planters with whom we have worked have been nice people who wanted to serve God in a meaningful way; people of seemingly good character who were serious about their faith. These qualities, while important for people serving in Christian ministry, have little to do with the success of a church planter. Church planting requires a set of behaviors and a skill set that differs significantly from those needed by pastors of existing churches.

Behaviors, traits and skills of successful church planters:

- They demonstrate initiative and the ability to manage their time without supervision and need little structure.
- They have a history of starting new things. (businesses, programs, etc.)
- They have a track record of recruiting people to serve on a team.

- They have the ability to determine the most important tasks which must be done and the focus to accomplish them.
- They are comfortable with chaos and starting from scratch.
- They know their strengths and weaknesses and can build a team around themselves to build on the strengths and compensate for the weaknesses.
- Their desire to plant a church flows from a desire to help people meet, know and serve Jesus; not because they can't get along in an existing church or because they are looking for a career change.
- They are not easily discouraged nor are they quick to give up.
- They tend to be described by many of the following words: independent, entrepreneurial, maverick, driving, obsessive, hard-working, action-oriented, decisive, confident, self-starter, optimistic and relational.

The church planting system must determine how candidates are going to be assessed and who is going to be responsible for making the assessment. The assessment of prospective church planters can be conducted by the organization itself or out-sourced to a consultant or assessment center. Regardless of the path that is chosen, the system will need to determine its criteria for selection. Every system has “knock out” issues – those things that either must or must not be present in a candidate in order for them to be selected to plant a church within that system. Knock out issues may be theological (ex. the prospective planter must have a Wesleyan theology), academic (ex. the candidate must be a seminary graduate), denominational (ex. the candidate must have been a member of our denomination for at least ten years), personal (ex. the candidate can not be one who uses alcohol or tobacco products) or spiritual (ex. the planter must speak in tongues). The specific knock out issues vary from system to system but they need to be identified. A thorough assessment process will also address the affinities of the planter, that is, the specific types of people and kinds of places in which the planter will probably be most successful due their unique background and life experience.

### **Training – Developing Skill Sets in Church Planters**

Training is often what makes a potentially successful planter into a successful planter. The church planting system must determine the key skill sets that are most needed by those planting churches, how those skills will be developed and who will deliver the training. Skill development can be handled in-house or can be outsourced to a consultant or training organization. Training is not limited to the time frame prior to the beginning of the church-planting project. On-going training is also needed and the system will want to address how that training is to be provided. Both the planter and the church-planting system may find it helpful to create a personal development plan for each planter (and supervisor).

Key areas necessary for skill development and training, recruiting, holding a recruiting conversation and enlisting people include:

- Formation and clarification of mission, vision and core values.
- Development of a realistic time-line for the church-planting project.
- Fundraising, stewardship, investment of resources, resource development.
- Team building and vision-casting.
- The role and value of a coach.
- Launch team development, organization and activities.
- Designing the worship experience.
- Finding and evaluating possible meeting locations.
- Clearly defining the target audience.
- Preview services and pre-launch worship team development.
- Marketing, advertising, attraction events, publicity.

• for pastors starting new churches • for churches starting new churches • for resourcing our newest churches •

- Networking and building a web of contacts, developing influence.
- Balancing the demands of planting and personal/family issues.
- Church planting models: parachute drop, hiving, churches-starting-churches, etc.

### Deploying Church Planters for Maximum Effectiveness

Effective deployment begins with the fundamental assumption that not every prospective planter can start a church in a particular context with equal effectiveness. The church planting system has the responsibility to know both the prospective planter and the context of the church plant in sufficient detail to determine the probable degree of affinity between the two. A more extreme example will illustrate what happens all-too-frequently in the assignment of church planters.

A 25-year-old planter from a small farming community in the mid-west who was raised in a lower-income blue-collar traditional family is appointed to a planting project designed to reach affluent professionals working in the downtown business district or a major city in the northeast.

It is unlikely that the planter will have a high degree of affinity for either the context or the target population for the new church. In fact, the degree of discomfort could be so great as to cause the planter to quickly become discouraged or even quit. Deployment issues are critical decisions, not minor details.

#### Major issues in the deployment of church planters:

- When are the planters selected? How much time will be needed to prepare for the planting?
- Who selects the planter for each specific planting project?
- Who selects the area/context in which a plant will be located? What are the selection criteria for making this decision?
- How is affinity between the planter and the context determined and who makes this determination?
- What are the expectations and obligations of the church planter and the church planting system and how are these communicated?
- How will “success” be determined and what is the exit strategy if the criteria are not met?
- Are the criteria clearly defined and able to be measured quantitatively? Is the system and the planter in agreement about these criteria?
- How does the system receive feedback from the planters regarding the process of recruitment, assessment, training and deployment?

The development of a church-planting system is a long-term process. A clear focus on issues related to the recruitment, assessment, training and development of new church pastors is needed to ensure that these crucial components are strengths of that system.

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*Dr. Don Nations is an associate of The Griffith Coaching Network and has trained as a consultant with Bill Easum. He is a Certified Human Behavior Consultant and is a nationally certified coach for church planters. He has both planted a church and served as a turn-around pastor for several churches during his ministry. He currently serves as the Director of a teaching parish (cooperative church ministry) and has published several articles. Don is available to coach planters, work with denominations and judicatories, train coaches, assess potential planters and conduct on-site consultations.*

## Target Area Community Assessment

By John Southwick, General Board of Global Ministries

Any type of assessment must be done in light of the expectations the subject of the assessment needs to achieve. In the case of a target community, expectations deriving from the Comprehensive Plan for New Church Development, or other objectives from those doing congregational development, will have provided a framework. Presumably the target area will, in fact, have become a target area because it has displayed characteristics in line with expectations. An area does not become a “target” area by chance.

For example, if a goal of New Church Development is to plant a new church in an area of rapid population growth due to urban sprawl, where no church presently exists, an area displaying that characteristic would become a candidate for a target area. In like manner, if developing a new African American congregation were the goal, finding areas with underserved populations, or anticipated populations of African Americans, would be desired.

Sometimes the process may fail to be proactive and turn out to be reactive. These situations are typically someone realizing that something has already happened demographically and that there is no church where these things are happening. Several large housing developments may have sprung up without advance knowledge by church officials, with no church presence. The reaction is such that a church needs to go there. The problem with reactive planning is that it is much more difficult to acquire land and to reach the people, who may have made other church decisions already.

It is difficult to sort out the assessment/determination of an area, from the process or circumstances which have led to deciding to start a new church, without speaking in generalities. A key principle is identifying people groups which need the Church, and are not being served. This includes anticipating the emergence of such groups. The most obvious situation is where the population is growing rapidly, where it had not been before. Another is where the population of an existing area is not growing but changing in its composition. The most common change is the racial/ethnic distribution in that community. This can also include generational or psychographic change.

Another issue in determining the need for a new church, even if there is the strong or strongly emerging people group, is the current church(es) which can serve them. For example, as population becomes more dense around the fringes of a metropolitan area, existing country churches are engulfed. These churches are there already so one might expect that they could serve the new people. They seldom do, however, due to lack of vision and mission to do so, lack of leadership (pastoral and/or lay), unwillingness to change from being a small country chapel, land limitations, ineffective existing ministry, unappealing facilities, and the like. If these churches cannot change to meet the needs, a new start may be warranted. Sometimes these small churches can change, such as the case of Mt. Pisgah.

A related factor is the presence of non-UMC churches. The Baptists or Presbyterians may get there first with the same missional purpose in mind. Not all churches are alike in doctrine, style, outreach, and overall ministry, so the presence of other churches could mean there is still a need for a UMC, or even a UMC with a focused mission to reach folks the others are not. Nevertheless, the “competition” should be assessed.

A valuable tool in identifying target areas is the thematic map. These are shaded maps with a particular demographic variable emphasized in the color scheme. These can be made for a district, or even conference. For example, a thematic map representing population growth may have bright red indicating areas with the greatest anticipated growth and blue for those of least growth/greatest decline. Several shades of graduated color in between would complete the picture. One could see at a glance where the “hot” areas are. The map can be enhanced to place existing churches on it to indicate if the “hot” areas have any churches present. On the other end of the spectrum, one can see if declining areas have too many churches present.

One complication of the thematic map representing growth is that it is based on census geography units, commonly the block group. These are not uniform size so can be misleading. It makes a big difference if population is increasing by 500 people in an area covering 20 acres, in contrast to 500 new people in an area covering 5 square miles. Thematic maps can also be obtained that give anticipated population density growth, which alleviates this concern. Population density is population per unit area, usually square mile.

Another type of thematic map can show the concentration of ethnic or racial populations. Others can illumine median household income, youth populations, turnover levels (how transient people are), and just about any other demographic variable, for that matter.

Demographic data can come in tabular form too. For instance, all the zip codes of the conference can be listed with corresponding demographic variables of interest. These can be ranked to easily spot areas where particular demographics are most accentuated.

While demographics can be ordered from providers such as the Research Office of GBGM, or from Percept, other forms of data can be obtained by querying local and regional government and private sources. Planning boards, Realtors, school districts, Chamber of Commerce, are all sources of information about what changes may be taking place in the region, as well as what needs may be present.

One must not forget to actually spend time on the ground as well. Driving around can often give insights. Whenever driving for other purposes, one should be keeping the eyes open to anything which smacks of ministry opportunity. Talk to pastors when the opportunity comes up. Ask them what is happening in their communities. If possible, fly around in a small plane. It is amazing how clearly growth can be spotted from the air.

Pay attention to infrastructure issues such as highways, sewer, and water. Freeways can make or break an area, by either providing better access or isolating the area. If a community seems to be a good prospect, what availability is there for land and/or meeting facilities? How expensive is real estate? Do the schools allow rental of space for worship? How expensive is office space?

In growth areas, awareness of the source of the growth is very useful. For example, if it is due to a major employer opening a new facility in the area, the stability of the employer is vital. Some communities are in major decline due to closing of major industry. A general sense of the direction of the economy may influence congregational development decisions in general.

While gathering all the relevant data is usually advisable, do not forget to utilize the most relevant source. Hard data which can be analyzed by the mind God has given us should certainly be employed, but let's not forget to keep the ultimate source of all truth in the formula as well. All decisions and analysis should be done prayerfully, seeking God's direction in all matters.



## Part Three: Planting a New Church

## Identifying a Target Audience

### New Church Planter Assessing the Community

By John Southwick, General Board of Global Ministries

The new church start pastor should have some awareness of the nature of the community and sense of mission before arriving, but further information is obviously valuable. The Conference / District will have had a sense of expectation for the new church as they identified the community in which they wanted to start the new work. For example, a pastor sent to a typical growing suburban setting will already know that he or she will not be starting a City Center ministry. A pastor sent to a retirement community will not have gone there expecting to start a Gen X church. The basics will be known but refinement will make the new start even more effective.

A new church start will not succeed to its full potential if it tries to be a “one size fits all” ministry. “Build and they will come” is not a safe assumption. The most effective ministry will be done when the ministry style connects with the people it is intended to reach. This means understanding who is there, deciding which of these possible people groups to target, and doing it. Large churches can offer multiple ministries to connect with multiple people groups. Small churches and new starts need to be selective, given the limited resources.

In marketing terms, defining people groups is called segmentation. There are countless ways to segment, such as by gender, age, race, income, lifestyles, interests, musical tastes, etc. Furthermore, one can combine categories to define very specific segments. In assessing the community, the more precise one can become, the better equipped one becomes to reach one or more of these segments. The process of choosing which segment(s) to focus ministry on is called targeting.

One of the most basic requirements to knowing the community is to define the boundaries of the community. Again, the Conference / District should have provided some guidance on this, but being clear is essential. No community is perfectly homogeneous, but the wider the boundaries, the more diversity one will usually include. Sometimes new church starts are given specific marching orders in defining the geography of their community, such as when a parcel of land has already been purchased. At other times, there is more flexibility. Important factors to defining the community dimensions also include natural boundaries such as freeways, preexisting boundaries such as city limits and school districts, clear demographic demarcations, local media circulation, population density distribution, and church resources available for outreach.

When getting to know one’s community there is no substitute for time on the ground meeting people and circulating. Demographics can be very helpful, though. In using the demographics, the first challenge is to match the boundaries of your community to the demographic boundaries available. Common demographic units include counties, zip codes, census tracts, and block groups. Some demographic providers can work with a three or five mile radius, but to do so they use statistical fudging to adapt the block group data. If the demographic provider cannot match the exact boundaries, the data is still useful, given the user makes an effort to compensate for the differences in geography. Thematic maps, based on block groups, can provide clarification of how boundaries effect various demographic variables.

Standard demographic categories include age, income, population, race, ethnicity, education, marital status, number of children, owner vs. rental households, households, type of employment, commute times,

and frequency of moves, among others. Assembling this information can give a vital view of what types of people live near the proposed church site. While it is not possible to ask for each of these categories for a subset of the community (e.g., what is the income distribution of unmarried households with 2 children?), one can still get a good sense of the characteristics of the entire community, as a whole.

Another demographic tool is the lifestyle cluster. This is a sort of created stereotyping done by demographics marketing companies, which classifies people by their demographics on the one hand, but also on their interests and how they spend their time and money. The cluster descriptions are generated by sophisticated computer software and are remarkably useful. Both Percept and the Research Office provide these clusters for study areas but in different format. Though both providers get their data from a company called Claritas, this company has undergone some mergers so supports Microvision and Prizm clusters. Microvision is used by Percept and has 50 clusters, while the Research Office utilizes Prizm, with its 62 clusters.

Lifestyle cluster information has the added benefit of giving insightful information on such characteristics as music preference, recreational activities, magazines read, TV programs watched, and worldview issues. All of these can contribute to a clearer understanding of the type of people living around the church site. Additionally the Research Office offers recommendations for ministry around the areas of worship, Church School, and outreach.

The schools should be visited to get a sense of what the current numbers of children and youth are and what the schools anticipate them to be. Are there patterns in the enrollment changes? What is causing these?

The other churches in the community should be visited. How strong are they and who do they serve? Are there segments of people they are not serving who could be served by a United Methodist Church? Demographics can give some idea of the percentage of unchurched people in the area.

The intent is to become as knowledgeable as possible on who lives in the target community and how they might be defined, or segmented. This needs to be compared to the founding pastor's gifts, talents, experience, skills, and training, as well as to the human and financial resources he or she brings to the new church start. The key is to now determine how to best match the ministry resources to the segment, or audience, which is most appropriate. In other words, what group of people is present in significant number who has needs that the new church can effectively reach.

The founding pastor should not be expected to have to cross too many cultural barriers to connect with a segment of people. For example, it may become clear that there is a substantial unreached group of young married Gen Exers, without children. A Boomer, married pastor may not be the best person to connect with this audience.

The spiritual dimension of all this is crucial and should form the foundation for all other consideration. Those associated with founding the new work need to be in prayer throughout this discernment process. God may give them a distinct sense of calling to reach a certain audience. This is really the essence of what should be happening. God sometimes does this as information is processed; however, unless a clear revelation is given, the data research is recommended as well.

## Developing a Strategy for Mission: Purpose, Vision, and Values

By Dr. Edwin C. DeLong

The Biblical mandate is clear. Christians are by definition to disciple the next generation of disciples. The conferences of the United Methodist Church in recent years have rediscovered this as their core mission and the essence of any faith community. For too long, the church has lived as if congregations are formed to serve only the needs of its members. The Biblical mandate teaches that as important as this might be, faith communities are to be focused on ministries that engage those who are not currently part of this faith community. Dr. Adam Hamilton, Senior Pastor of The Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, perhaps best states the attitude that enables a congregation to live out its mandate. When the pastor or members of the church meet new people, their thought is “what must I do to help this person to see this church as their faith communities?”

The exciting aspect of recapturing the core values of our Wesleyan heritage is that new faith communities are forming by intention rather than by chance. Also, apostolic leaders are being encouraged to use their gifts in the endeavor.

The case for this effort, whether the new faith communities are formed as part of existing congregation’s ministries or as new church plants, is made in the demographic research. The demographics indicate that the most effective way to engage new persons in a faith community is through the development of a new ministry setting. Dr. Craig Miller makes this point in his book, Next Church. Now.

As a conference develops a strategy for the implementation of the mission, clarity of this purpose with a well-framed statement of core values is required. This clarity enables the many participants who will give form(s) to the function of the mission a way to decide what ministries will best enable people who are unchurched to become part of an effective faith community. The rule of thumb is that a ministry must lead people to discipleship to even be considered as part of the faith community’s program offerings.

There are several elements of the strategy that are necessary for the conference to encourage existing congregations to develop new faith communities. Many of these elements are the same as what is needed for parachute drop type new faith communities. The elements can be divided into two categories: 1. on-going discernment, and 2. infrastructure to support the specific ministries once the pastor and site for development are in place.

### Leadership

Leadership is perhaps the most important element. By intention, leaders who behave as apostles, need to be recruited, trained and encouraged to lead in the development of new faith communities. Rev. Jim Griffith, founder of CoachNet, is a good resource. The assessment tools he uses, and trains denominational leaders to use, enables persons who think they may be called to develop new faith communities to look at their behavior tendencies. In a non-threatening environment, participants in the seminars discern their call and in what format they are best suited to develop new ministries. Conference sponsored Academy’s For Initiative Leaders is another useful tool in assisting those who demonstrate a leadership behavior to develop new ministries to test

out their call, as well as to further develop their skills to carry out the ministry. The Baltimore-Washington Conference, UMC uses both of these tools in the identification of apostolic leaders.

The Academy For Initiative Leaders is one of the most effective elements of the Baltimore- Washington Conference's strategy. Members are chosen by the bishop and Cabinet in consultation with the Board of Congregational Life. A total of 36 clergy and lay members of the Academy meet 18 times over a three-year period. Session leaders are chosen from among the many nationally known thinkers who intentionally study the behaviors of church leaders. The topics used to stimulate this peer-learning group in the recent past include: Developing Leaders Who Develop Leaders, Characteristics of Healthy Churches, Naming the Many Forms of Multi-site Ministry Strategies, Transformation of Conflict Into Positive Energy, Discipleship systems that Work, Ministry in a Multiethnic World, Relational Evangelism Strategies, and Understanding of a Faith Community Life Cycle.

In addition to these conference-based leadership development opportunities, the General Board of Global Ministry and General Board of Discipleship offer an annual School for Congregational Development, George Barna's seminars and the Christian Communication Network.

## Demographics

The second element needed is an on-going look at demographics. Change is inevitable. The demographic landscape of our conferences indicates that many of our churches are located in areas where populations once lived, with a shortage of congregations in places where people now live. In addition, often congregations conduct ministries that speak to current church populations and fail to develop ministries that speak to those who are not part of any church congregation. The changing landscape of our multi-ethnic, metropolitan world indicate that conferences need to always be looking for the population shifts and develop ministries that will engage those who are new to the neighborhood. Several resources are helpful in the development of this element: GBGM Resource Office, Percept, Local Planning and Zoning Commissions and perhaps most effective is what I call "walk around the neighborhood conversations" with the locals.

## Funding

The third on-going element involves a persistent search for funding. The development of new ministries is expensive. The idea is that the needed capital is available from a variety of sources. Conference agencies designated to have church development as its prime responsibility are developing partnerships among the in-house funding streams, as well as with private foundations and government agencies.

Once the Cabinet and Annual Conference designates a leader and a ministry site, an infrastructure needs to be designed to support the specific requirements of the ministries. The needed elements include a variety of pastoral and professional support systems for the pastor, pastor's family and laity involved in the new faith community.

First, the pastor in particular needs an opportunity to put to paper a ministry action plan and to interface with the variety of resources that are available to implement the plan. Conferences throughout the United States have developed their own version of a "bootcamp" for the pastor to develop an integrated ministry action plan. They have also sent their new faith community developers to the United Methodist Denomination's annual School of Congregational Development. It is becoming the practice of many conferences to send teams of people to the denomination's annual school. Bishops, district superintendents, Conference Program Staff all are involved in the life of the new ministries. It is helpful for each person to review and thoroughly understand their specific role as it interplays with the development of a new ministry. The School of Congregational Development provides such an opportunity for everyone to work from the same page.

As the plan is implemented, coaches are to be connected with the new faith community pastors and faith communities. The coaches' responsibility is to ask the "who," "what," "why," "where" and "when" questions related to the ministry action plan. If adjustments in the original plan are needed, the coach ensures that the modifications are intentional and well thought out. In the Baltimore-Washington Conference, coaches work with covenant groups of 4 pastors who are serving in similar ministry settings.

With the realization that the development of new ministries is perhaps the most stressful of settings, many conferences encourage the pastors appointed to these ministries to see pastoral counselors. The energy and passion involved in the development of a new ministry is so great that the pastor's life values inadvertently become too closely aligned with the ministry. The role of the conference is to provide the resources for pastors and their families to seek with anonymity the services of a pastoral counselor on a regular basis as the pastor and/or family desires.

Closely associated with the previous self-care support, the strategy needs to include a stated support that pastors need to have a social life and close friends. Like the pastoral counseling resource, the conference can only suggest and encourage the development of friendships.

There are also several bottom line understandings that need to undergird the strategy. First, development of new faith communities is first a God-led spiritual journey. The pastor, core team, and all conference level leaders responsible to resource these new ministries need to practice the means of grace on a regular basis. At these times the practice of prayer, Bible study and worship need to be done together. Second, with a sense of order, the development of new faith communities is more like sailing a sailboat than it is riding on an ocean liner. Flexibility to make carefully considered adjustments and to develop resources that had not been anticipated in advance is critical to the process. Third, it is to be understood that no two new faith communities will be the same. Finally, it must be remembered that it takes time to develop new trust relationships with people who have never perceived themselves as disciples. Therefore, it is to be understood that the development of new faith communities will take several years

## Developing a Strategy for Mission

### Dreaming Big and Narrowing The Focus

By: Ben Cathey, Senior Minister, The Orchard United Methodist Church

#### The Dream

Every effective new church starts with a God-given dream, an image in someone's mind of what it might be. For every new church there is somebody, somewhere who dreamed of that church and set the wheels in motion to create it. If you have been called to plant a new church, then your mind is surely buzzing with dreams about what that new church will look like, who it will reach, how it will worship and what it will be called. The church is being born in the heart, mind, and soul of its new leader. Congratulations! The journey of a lifetime is about to begin...

These dreams are the beginning of developing a strategy for mission. What is the dream? What is it that God is calling you to accomplish? Dream big dreams. Big dreams are full of the impossible. Big dreams do not consider the path by which they will be accomplished, but only the outcome that they will obtain. Is the dream worthwhile? Is it the right dream? Here are some questions to help test the dream:

1. Has it been wrought in prayer?
2. Is it a great accomplishment for God?
3. Will it help other people?
4. Will it bring the best out of you?
5. Is God calling you to it?
6. Has your life preparation prepared you to accomplish it?
7. Can you pour your whole life into it?

My dream for The Orchard began with a passion to see non-believers find faith in Jesus. As my talents, abilities and circumstances lined up with that passion, it became clear that I was being called to plant a new church. Non-believers could be reached without starting a new congregation, but it appeared to be the most effective means. Part of that dream was to create a church that "shone brightly as a beacon of faith, hope, and love in East Atlanta; a church made up of real people who actively lead others to a real Savior and a church that meets real needs as compelled by a real God to do so; a church full of people who are so contagious with authentic Christian life that non-believing, dechurched, and unchurched people are drawn by the hundreds and thousands to experience Jesus for themselves – many for the first time."

#### The Mission

You can't develop an effective strategy for mission unless you first have the mission clearly set before you. The mission is certainly the outcome, but just as importantly, it determines the strategy that will get you there. A mission is simply the crystallization of a God-given dream. It is a communication tool to direct your team. It is a slogan that will attract people to your cause. A mission is putting "ink" to what you "think." A great mission answers yes to the following questions: Is it biblical? Can the average person remember it easily? Can you measure it? Is it easily understood? Does it reflect God's best? Is it true to your dream?

I suggest that you "ink" a mission that reflects these qualities before you start recruiting and organizing core team members. This will help attract like-minded people who want to do something great for God. People want to get involved with new church plants for all kinds of unhealthy reasons. Having the mission inked before beginning helps point to something tangible that team members can agree upon.

I nailed down the mission of The Orchard while on a three-day personal spiritual retreat about two months before beginning the process of actively recruiting people to help the launch. The Orchard's mission is to "Connect Unchurched, Dechurched, and Non-believing People to a Growing Experience of Jesus." Right up front, I let people know that this church is primarily about Jesus, those who don't know him, and spiritual growth. This mission is the beginning and ending point for our ministry strategy.

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## The Core Values

Core Values are the guiding principles behind your mission. They give your mission further definition and needed boundaries. Aubrey Malphurs says that core values affect nothing less than “decision making, risk taking, goal setting, conflict resolution, problem solving, priorities determination, roles clarification, team building, financial management, and resource utilization.”<sup>1</sup> Core values tell those inside and outside the congregation what is distinctive and important. Core values dictate personal involvement, inspire people to action, and are a reminder of ministry priorities. A good core value is much like a good mission, only more specific. What core values will serve as driving principle for accomplishing your mission? Write your own indigenous values that are based on your mission and your local context. Learn from others, but do not copy them and gather examples from many different sources before beginning. A few good examples of core values can be found at

www.theorchardchurch.  
org, www.faithbridge.com  
www.mosaic.com  
www.newhopenc.org  
www.theorchard.net  
and www.northpoint.org

At The Orchard our mission is “connecting unchurched, dechurched, and non-believing People to a Growing Experience of Jesus.” This dictated that one of the core values had to be about evangelism. The problem with evangelism is that it comes in so many flavors. Some are good flavors and some are bad. Our evangelism core value gives direction to our mission and boundary to our activities. It is: “All people need Jesus Christ. Life-giving evangelism will always be our primary cause.” This core value describes evangelism as life-giving, which means respectful, helpful and non-oppressive. It also clearly states our belief that all people need Jesus regardless of cultural, religious, or ethnic affiliation. It also calls the people of The Orchard to action by calling evangelism our primary cause.

## The Structure

Now that you have a mission and core values have been inked, begin creating a structure that is aligned with your core values and that will help accomplish the mission. Begin with this one question: What will the church need to look like if it is going to accomplish the mission and stay true to the core values? In many ways, this aspect of planning is a continuation of the dreaming process. Dream about as many aspects of the new church is possible without getting bogged down by minutia. It’s like the proposal for a construction project. It does not include detailed measurements and instructions, but it does include general ideas about how the different spaces in a building should function.

### EXAMPLES:

**What will evangelism look like?** Will it be intentional or passive? Will the street corner be utilized? Will preaching, personal invitation, servant evangelism (find out more at [www.kindness.com](http://www.kindness.com)), or some other means be used to reach people? How will church members be influenced to be evangelists? Will it be high pressure or low pressure?

**What will discipleship processes look like?** How will people be moved from one level of spiritual commitment to the next? What are the goals for disciple making? How will people be involved in all aspects of disciple making beyond mere knowledge accumulation? What about small groups? Will it be a church with small groups or a church of small groups? How will you enable involvement in groups? When will they meet? Who will lead them? How will they grow?

**What will membership look like?** What will the expectations for members be? How will they join? What will be special about membership?

**What will prayer ministries look like?** How will prayer ministries take shape in the church? How will prayer take a place of priority?

*What will care ministries look like?* Who will be primary care givers in the church? What will be the expectations of the pastor for care giving?

*What will leadership development look like?* How will you recruit, train, identify new leaders while feeding existing ones? How will you align your leaders around your mission?

The Orchard's structure was outlined in a forty-page document that breathed some life into to the mission. In this "dream paper" a clear vision was set forth for each of the areas mentioned above and other areas as well. This paper did not plant The Orchard. Not did it serve as a substitute for face to- face vision casting. It did, however, provide an anchor for decision-making and helped me train our core team. I still refer to it six months after launch to make sure that we are building what we set out to build.

## The Plan

A ministry plan includes all the details that will help get the new church off the ground and into full ministry mode. If the particulars are not doing this, then they are not needed in the plan. The plan is the detailed measurements for the construction project. It is the blueprint. If the mission, core values, and structure help guide you and your team philosophically, theologically, and organizationally, then the plan helps guide you day-to-day and week-by-week. What will it take to make all these ideas that you have ironed out through prayer, sharing, discussion, sweat, exegesis, and hard work a living, breathing, vital, dynamic reality? That's what the plan is all about. Fail to plan and plan to fail. This part should come naturally and easily if your mission, core values, and structure are in place. Narrow your focus toward a specific, accomplishable plan. The plan should include every aspect of ministry that can be reasonably thought out. Break the dream into manageable parts that can happen today. Realize that each part is like a stair step toward accomplishing the mission. Remember that big dreams, just like big buildings, have lots of steps.

What human and material resources are needed, and how will they be put together to achieve maximum results? How will solid core team members be recruited? How and when will prayer partners be found for planting the new church? How and when will the core team be trained and disciplined? How will others be gathered around the mission? When and how will the community be reached? What methods will be used to teach core team members? Will the church start with a Bible study, vision meetings, outreach projects, private worship services? What about funding needs? How will money be raised for the mission – from other churches or individuals?

The plan should look like a construction time line. You are the master builder of this project. What pieces need to be in place at what times in order to move to the next step in the planting process? How many people will be needed? What can be accomplished alone and where will others be needed to get the job done? What kind of funds will be needed? How will each step in the process help accomplish the mission and lead to the next step in the process? Make sure that each step will build toward the next step in the launch process. Here are a few ideas that will be helpful.

**Getting Prepared:** Tasks that need to start almost immediately are mission, core values, money, prayer, demographic and psychographic research, office set-up, local relationship building, and core team recruitment.

**Getting Started:** The tasks in preparation for outreach are a name, a logo, a web site, possible staff recruitment, and core team training and expansion.

**Getting Noticed:** These tasks are specific outreach events that will let the community know a new church is being started. Some examples are servant evangelism projects, kids carnivals, concerts, booths at local festivals, etc., etc.

**Getting Excited:** The final parts of this plan must include a strategy for the tasks that will lead directly to the launch or grand opening worship service. How will you resources be gathered and built up to launch? Will preview worship, mail saturation, telemarketing, or door hangers be utilized? When does a spot need to be secured, mailers ordered and telemarketing arranged? What about music, hospitality, childcare, audio-visual equipment? When is the big day? How will prayer be organized for the launch effort? What kind of follow up will be done? Who will be thanked? Who will be expected to show up the next week? How will people get involved with ministries outside of worship?

At The Orchard, a budget plan and a calendar plan were organized. The budget plan was simply the best estimate based on budgets from a couple of other church plants. The calendar plan is the most important.

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The calendar plan was divided into the two categories of “solo jobs” and “team jobs” with twenty-nine different line items that represented specific activities. The plan ran from June to the launch date in March of the following year. You can see an example of this on the following pages.

### Final Thoughts

This seems like a ton of paperwork, but consider what is being planned. If the church becomes everything God wants it to be, then many people will repent and find forgiveness of sins and salvation through Jesus. Many more will find a renewed commitment to follow Jesus in daily living. The outcome for this effort is nothing less than healthy lives, healthy communities, interrupted addictions, saved marriages, healthy families, financial responsibility, social justice, thwarted abuse, and mature followers of Christ who serve as light and hope in this dark world. Leading the effort that will create a new community to carry this vision forward for generations to come is an incredible gift and an awesome task. It deserves your best dreaming, your best praying, and your best planning efforts. Will everything work out just like it was planned? No. Will God still work through the ministry efforts if you don't plan? Of course! Will you do more, become more, and reach more people if you plan well? Yes. Will God work more effectively through the ministry efforts if you give Him your best in the planning stage? That's my experience...

### Helpful Books:

A Church For The 21st Century by Leith Anderson  
 Turning Vision Into Action by George Barna  
 Doing Church As A Team by Wayne Cordeiro  
 20/20 Vision by Dale Galloway  
 Leading With Vision by Dale Galloway  
 Church for the Unchurched by George Hunter  
 Entertainment Evangelism by Walt Kallestad  
 Turn Your Church Inside Out by Walt Kallestad  
 Church Planting For the 21st Century by Aubrey Malphurs  
 Values Driven Leadership by Aubrey Malphurs  
 Unlearning Church by Michael Slaughter  
 Spiritual Entrepreneurs by Michael Slaughter  
 Postmodern Pilgrims by Leonard Sweet  
 Church Planting for a Great Harvest by Peter Wagner  
 The Purpose Driven Church by Rick Warren

### Footnotes

1 Malphurs, Aubrey. Values-Driven Leadership - Discovering and Developing Your Core Values for Ministry. Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Book House, 1996.



## Tips for New Church Starts

By Craig Kennet Miller, General Board of Discipleship

Here are key resources, ideas, and themes that should be worked on in developing a new congregation:

### Key Contacts:

#### General Board of Discipleship

Staff in the area of congregational development are a resource for training and equipping leaders for new congregational development. Working with Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church, they focus on the areas of developing small groups, generational studies, new worship services, and the development of a discipleship system. Staff may be contacted at 877-899-2790.

#### General Board of Global Ministries

Staff in the area of congregational development specialize in demographics, loans, and building design. Working with Annual Conferences, they give key leadership in identifying and developing a process for starting new churches. Staff may be contacted at 212-870-3860.

#### Joint Committee of Congregational Development – [www.umcncd.org](http://www.umcncd.org)

The Joint Committee of Congregational Development of the UMC is made up of congregational development staff from the General Board of Discipleship and the General Board of Global Ministries. The Joint Committee offers a number of opportunities for leadership training for new church developers, conference staff, and district superintendents.

### Before Starting:

Attend at least one seminar for New Congregational Development and read books related to the topic.

Visit new churches and talk to new church pastors and leaders to learn the process they used to start their church. Also attend as many worship experiences as possible from a wide variety of churches to get a feel of what speaks to people and what makes for an effective worship experience.

Start at least one new small group. Better yet start a small group system in the church you are currently part of. Also be part of an accountability group that helps develop prayer life, study of the Bible, and the development of healthy relationships between you, your family, and those in the group.

Start a new worship experience or be part of a group that plans ongoing worship that specifically focuses on reaching new people in the community.

Pay attention to your health. Physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health are vital tools for the new church developer.

Work on your artistic side. Learn a musical instrument, sing, participate in graphic arts, drama, dance, or paint. Get in touch with your creative side. Most successful church developers are able to think from an artistic viewpoint. Remember that art speaks to the heart.

**Self-Care:**

1. Identify to the congregation your day off and the day you do your sermon and worship preparation. Hold to these days and people will respect your time.
2. Develop a weekly and monthly calendar that shows how time will be spent. Share with your family and accountability group.
3. Develop an accountability group.
4. Create a prayer group of people outside of the local ministry to keep you and your ministry in prayer.
5. Find a mentor, someone who has started a church in the past, who can be called on for advice and support.
6. Protect your family time.
7. Pray daily for guidance and wisdom.

**First Steps:**

1. Get to know the community.

Use the following survey as a way to learn about the people who live in your community. Pick out a neighborhood and go door to door. Or set yourself up in front of a grocery store and invite people to take a survey. Plan to do as least 100 of these surveys yourself. This is about the only way you will begin to see who will be part of your future congregation. Robert Schuller, Bill Hybels, and Rick Warren all started their ministry in their new communities by conducting a house to house survey. One denomination gives the new pastor of a new church a pair of shoes and instructs them to knock on 1,000 doors.

**The Survey**

- a. Are you active in a local church? (If yes, go to the next house or person)
  - b. Why do you think most people do not go to church?
  - c. What is the greatest need in the community?
  - d. What advice would you give to me as a Pastor (or new church starter)?
  - e. Would you be interested in finding out more about our church? (If he or she says yes, write down the address for future contact.)
2. Visit other churches in the area to see what kind of worship experiences that are being offered. Look for what is working, what is not working, and what is not currently being offered.
  3. Get a demographic printout of your community. Your Annual Conference should have access to this kind of information. The Board of Global Ministries offers churches a demographic survey. You may contact their office at 212-870-3840.
  4. Do a drive around and a walk around survey of the area to see what fits and does not fit with the demographic picture.
  5. Talk to key leaders in the community. Find out where future growth will take place, what is happening in the school system, what are the most important needs, and what opportunities are available to be in service.
  6. Check out traffic flow on work days and at the time you are planning to offer your first worship experience.
  7. Design your discipleship system. Develop or find a resource to will for developing the core group of the new congregation. Develop the ongoing classes or experiences that will help people grow in spiritual maturity.

**Gather the People:**

1. At first meetings and events, start everything with prayer.
2. Design first gatherings as the first part of the discipleship process.
3. The first goal is to establish a healthy core group: a healthy core group is a Christian community that supports, prays, and works together as a team.
4. Make sure the core group reflects the people group or people groups seen as the future make-up of the congregation.

**Sites:**

Decide on the space needed for gathering and what you need for office needs and small groups.

For large gatherings you can check out the following:

1. Schools: A high school or middle school is preferable because youth in middle school or high school feel like they are going backward when they go to an elementary school.
2. Warehouse
3. Strip malls
4. Movie Theater, Dinner Theater, or Playhouse
5. Office Space: Strip malls or an office building. Make sure there is meeting space for music rehearsals and a room for childcare when there are meetings.

**Obtain Equipment:**

1. Computer with color printer
2. Phone Answering machine
3. Music System:
  - a. P.A. system that can handle electric keyboards, guitars, and bass as well as vocals.
  - b. CD or tape deck for playing music as people enter or for solos.
  - c. Keyboard with MIDI – MIDI means you can connect your keyboard with another keyboard or a computer. A professional keyboard can play organ music as well as piano and a wide variety of instruments. Look to spend about \$1,000 and up for a professional quality instrument.
  - d. Drum set— (this is for a church that will have a praise band. The best bet, if affordable, is an electric drum set because the volume can be adjusted to fit the size of the room. A drummer is more likely to be found if you provide a drum set).
4. LCD Projector and screen. LCD Projectors now run at about \$3,000, although their costs are going down with more widespread use. LCD projectors connect to computers and can project PowerPoint presentations for singing or showing announcements. They also can be connected to a VCR for projecting videos.

**Obtain Licenses:**

1. Church Music License for printing or projecting words of songs: [www.ccli.com](http://www.ccli.com) Also check out the worship section at [www.gbod.org](http://www.gbod.org) for an updated list of companies that provide licenses..
2. Motion Picture Licensing Company that allows you to show video tapes in worship: 1-800-515-8855

**Staff:**

1. Music person is primary: The kind of music offered will determine who comes!
2. Look for an administrator who will help co-ordinate the growth of groups and ministries in the congregation.

**Money:**

1. Develop a budget for the first two years. Plan to share this vision with the core group and with denominational staff working with you.
2. Develop a process for receiving funds: In the United Methodist Church, ask the treasurer of the District or the Annual Conference to handle and process funds until the new start is well enough established to have a treasurer.
3. Look for opportunities to share the vision for this new ministry with people who would be interested in helping to fund the work. Ask other churches or people to buy specific pieces of equipment for the project. Develop large donors who will begin to see this as part of their giving ministry.

**Launching the Public Ministry:**

1. Have a discipleship system in place before beginning.
2. Plan the first ten weeks of worship. Lay out the themes and scripture.
3. Start the first worship service when you know that you will have at least 150 to 300 people have committed to be in worship. Some congregations develop a small group system of eight to ten groups and bring the together for the first time at the launch. Others do phone marketing or mass mailings. Many do a combination of the two.
4. Style of worship is key – who are you trying to reach?
5. Determine dress code – people in leadership (musicians, greeters, speakers, liturgists, and ushers) communicate what is acceptable.
6. Have people in front who are in the same people group you are attempting to reach. Take into account gender, ethnicity, and age. Leadership for the worship service (musicians, liturgists, and speakers) model who are welcome in the worship experience.
7. Have a dress rehearsal of the service the week before it is offered at the site.

**Children and Youth:**

1. Offer quality childcare and church school for children. The UMC Publishing House offers free Church School material for new congregations at 1-800-672-1789, ex. 6167.
2. Develop a system for checking in all children who are in Church school. (One idea – laminate number cards that a parent takes with them after they have checked the child in. Make them small enough to fit in a shirt pocket. After worship children are released to the person who has the card. Or get a beeper system like restaurants use).
3. Develop a discipleship system for children and youth.

**People show up, now what do I do?**

1. Follow-up with a letter from the pastor and a visit or phone call from a lay member or pastor of the church. Develop a system to tell whether visitors are returning. If they are not coming back, try a different way of following up or change the people who are making the contacts. Keep careful track of people as they attend and they respond to your ministry.

2. Develop your own registration card that includes a spot to identify if they are a visitor, an attender, or a member. Have a section for prayer concerns and for interest in classes or ministry opportunities. See Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Church*, p. 261 for a good illustration of this.
3. Develop a newsletter to keep visitors, attenders, and members informed.
4. Have on hand business cards with the name, address, and phone of the church on front and a map of where you worship is held on the back.
5. Invite people to small groups, Bible studies, and ministry opportunities.

**Available Resources:**

Hamilton, Adam, *Leading Beyond the Walls: Developing Congregations with a Heart for the Unchurched*, Abingdon

Melton, Joy Thornburg, *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*, Discipleship Resources

Miller, Craig Kennet, *NextChurch.Now: Creating New Faith Communities*, Discipleship Resources

Miller, Craig Kennet & Norton, MaryJane Pierce, *Making God Real to a New Generation: Ministry with the Millennial Generation*, Discipleship Resources (Winter 2003)

Reeves, Michael, *Extraordinary Money! Understanding the Church Capital Campaign*, Discipleship Resources

Warren, Rick, *The Purpose Driven Church*, Zondervan

Weber, Rob, *Reconnecting*, on DVD, Abingdon

Wills, Dick, *Waking To God's Dream: Spiritual Leadership and Church Renewal*, Abingdon

## Developing Prayer Support

By Dan Slagle, Faithbridge United Methodist Church

### Faithbridge Church

Faithbridge United Methodist Church, Spring, TX, was begun in the Fall of 1998 as a group of six individuals gathered for the first time in the apartment of founding pastor, Ken Werlein. From those small beginnings, Faithbridge has experienced tremendous growth in a number of areas. In the year 2002, average attendance was 1100 and 62 persons were baptized into the Christian faith. As 2003 begins, ministry is carried out through 80 small groups, and the church operates with 18 paid staff. A 2.5 million dollar purchase of 74 acres is projected to be paid off in 18 months and construction should begin on a first facility in 2005. The operating budget for 2003 is \$1.5 million with approximately 150,000 of those dollars devoted to missions beyond Faithbridge. Church growth experts offer any number of reasons explaining the rapid growth, however, Werlein points to one primary factor: prayer.

From the very beginning, prayer has been the focal point of life and ministry at Faithbridge Church. When setting out to plant a church, Werlein sought the counsel of fellow church planter, Jim Leggett, about how to proceed. Leggett advised to build the church on prayer, and Werlein says it is the best advice he ever received. Not only was the church planted on a foundation of prayer, but it continues to grow and develop as a praying congregation. How has Faithbridge accomplished this? What are the transferable concepts that any church-plant can utilize? The following paragraphs reveal four transferable truths that the Faithbridge community has learned and practiced regarding the role of prayer in church planting.

### It Begins With the Pastor

The pastor must be a person of prayer. Strong preaching on prayer and insightful teaching about prayer are no substitute for a life of prayer. Leadership sets the tone for any organization, including the church. If the senior pastor is not committed to the ongoing, consistent practice of prayer, the rest of the church cannot be expected to cultivate a strong commitment to pray. Faithbridge likes to refer to itself as a "house of prayer" and the part of the reason it can do so truthfully is because the senior pastor is a person who prays.

A full six months before Faithbridge was begun, the Lord impressed upon Werlein's heart the importance of his own prayer life. While traveling in South Korea, studying the largest churches in the world, Werlein was struck by the Korean Christian's fierce devotion to prayer. His journal entry of March 17, 1998 reads:

Lord, I am convicted of my prayerlessness. I give more a tip of the hat to prayer than an earnest, prioritized, blood-sweating commitment to it. I do all the work and you let me. I then carry all the burdens, and you let me. But you offer more. And I want to enlist myself now for more. I want to become a pastor, husband, father, and friend who prays so fervently, so deliberately that others know me for and associate me with my prayer life. That's a good vision, isn't it Lord? I am tired (not lacking in gratitude, though) of being noted for my musical or preaching talent, or for my love or warmth. But it's time now to become Ken Werlein' – man of prayer. Thank you that I do not have to fear comparison with others any longer – my prayers are adequate, my experience sufficient.

Since that time, Werlein has remained true to his commitment. His regular practice is to pray daily during a morning quiet time and all throughout the day as various needs or issues arise. Also, during a recent church-wide spiritual growth campaign, Werlein felt led to set aside Thursday afternoons from 2-6 PM for prayer. This is a practice he has continued since the close of the campaign and has made it a part of his regular weekly schedule.

## Build Prayer into the DNA of the Church

From the very beginning, the church must be and understand itself to be a house of prayer, a place where prayer is practiced and modeled in staff meetings, leadership meetings, etc.. At Faithbridge this was accomplished in two ways. First, even before Faithbridge was birthed, Werlein had recruited 100 prayer warriors from all around the country to pray for him and the new church. He communicated with them on a weekly basis via email, keeping them updated with needs and progress of the new church. In essence, the gestational period of the church was a concentrated season of prayer.

Second, the seven-member launch team agreed that every decision related to the new church would be made in prayer. Werlein impressed upon these pioneers that prayer was absolutely essential to the healthy development of the church. He cast a strong and consistent vision of prayer as the “engine” that would drive the church. The launch team caught his vision and began to grow in their personal prayer lives as well.

As a result of these efforts, prayer is the number one core value at Faithbridge. Werlein says, “Every person walking through the door, every staff member, every dollar we’ve raised started as a prayer request.” This initial and ongoing emphasis on prayer has set a tone at Faithbridge that keeps the church focused on the centrality of prayer. By doing so from the very beginning, prayer is now inextricably woven into the fabric or “DNA” of Faithbridge.

## Provide Prayer Opportunities

If the congregation is to move from a vision of prayer to the actual ongoing practice of prayer, one of the keys will be the provision of multiple opportunities to pray. Church plants tend to attract pre-Christian people and the conversion rate is typically higher in church plant situations than existing churches. As a result, church plants have a higher percentage of new Christians. These persons must be taught to pray and the most effective way to do so is by providing opportunities to pray. As a result, Faithbridge is continually looking for new prayer ministries to implement.

The key to enlisting larger numbers of prayers is to vary the nature of the opportunities. Many new Christians carry stereotypical notions of what prayer is all about and need to be exposed to a range of prayer ministries. Prayer ministry must not be limited to the traditional Wednesday night prayer meeting, but instead expand to meet various needs within the life of the church and community.

As of this writing, Faithbridge has twelve different prayer ministries in operation. Each of the twelve can be divided into two categories: those focused on the ministry of Faithbridge Church and those focused on the community and world at large. Those focused on the ministry of Faithbridge include:

1. The Prayer Gathering - meets once a week as a group to pray through the prayer requests of the congregation (gathered during worship services on Connect Card).
2. The Prayer Covering Team - pray during the Sunday worship services in a separate room to cover the services with prayer.
3. The Prayer Chain - pray for immediate needs that come in over the prayer line. Prayer line is monitored hourly throughout the day and needs are communicated to the team via email.
4. The Anointing Team - members bless and anoint chairs, building, and facilities before church services.
5. The Altar Team - pray with same-sex individuals in designated areas during the altar time of each weekly service. Team members are trained for this ministry.
6. The Pastor’s Prayer Team - commits to pray weekly for the senior pastor as he communicates needs and concerns via email.
7. The School of Prayer – offered twice a year, classes are taught on the practice of prayer ranging from the basics to deeper experiences.
8. The Celebrate Recovery Prayer Team - prays weekly for the recovery ministry of our church and for those struggling to break free from addictions.

9. Those focused on the community and world at large include:

The Prayer Center - participants pray in the prayer center (located in the church office) for one hour per week on a regular schedule.

The Pager Prayer Ministry - prays for those who are chronically or terminally ill. Each time a team member prays they call the pager number and all pagers ring to let suffering persons know they are being lifted up in prayer.

Prayer for the City - meets once a month to pray for Houston; specifically for the lost and for a kingdom influence among the churches.

Reach Prayer Team - prays weekly for the missions and evangelism ministry of Faithbridge.

Through these kinds of opportunities, Faithbridge is casting an ever wider vision for prayer and expanding the prayer base of the church.

### Continually Cast the Vision

If a church plant is going to experience a vital prayer ministry for the long term, the vision must be cast on a continual basis. Perhaps even more so than other ministries, prayer ministry experiences an ever present resistance and sense of inertia to overcome. Therefore, the importance and central role of prayer must be placed before the congregation at regular intervals. The core value of prayer is promoted at Faithbridge in a number of different ways.

Prayer ministry receives its greatest promotion each Spring when Faithbridge hosts its annual Prayer Conference. This event is a two day experience during which a noted leader in the area of prayer comes to provide fresh teaching, inspiration and insight. During its three year history, Faithbridge has watched the conference grow from 11 participants to 276. Upcoming conferences will include a plenary speaker and break out sessions on various aspects of prayer.

Faithbridge also holds three or four seasons of fasting and prayer each calendar year. Typically, these seasons last 40 days and the entire congregation is encouraged to fast and pray one day per week during the season. The season is usually associated with a goal or undertaking that requires focused prayer attention. For example, in 2001 the congregation prayed and fasted for 40 days while deciding whether to purchase a particular piece of land. Participation takes place on a volunteer basis and suggested prayer items are provided for each of the forty days

A third means of vision casting takes place through preaching and teaching. Each year Werlein devotes sermon time to the topic of prayer. This is accomplished through sermon series that are devoted to prayer or through individual sermons that make reference to the importance of prayer. Sermons tend to reach the widest possible audience and provide an excellent platform for far-reaching vision casting. Additionally, the School of Prayer offers regular courses on various aspects of prayer.

### Conclusion

In sum, one could say that Faithbridge has a strong prayer ministry because the congregation has intentionally chosen to make it so. For a variety of reasons the practice of prayer does not come naturally or easily to most people. Nevertheless, the leadership of Faithbridge Church believes, and their experience seems to bear out, that prayer is absolutely essential to the ongoing health and growth of a church. Therefore, Faithbridge, from its earliest days to the present, works to develop and maintain a strong prayer ministry. In so doing, it is much more capable of fulfilling its mission to "make more and stronger disciples."

## Coaches and Mentors: Two People Every Church Planter Needs

By Jim Griffith and Don Nations, The Griffith Coaching Network

Planting a church can be a wonderful, exciting experience; it can also be a lonely, discouraging journey. Because of this, it is important that every church planter have two special people in his/her life – a mentor and a coach. The two roles are very different and each addresses particular elements in the life and ministry of the planter.

Mentors are spiritual friends and gentle guides. They are wise people with years of ministry experience. Their focus is on the spiritual life of the planter and the well being on the planter's family. Mentors do not need to have been planters nor do they need to be knowledgeable about all aspects of church planting. Their role is not to teach or give advice about how to plant the church but to care and give advice on how to live. Mentors are usually either sought out or discovered – they are almost never assigned. Mentors may be part of the denominational system but this is not a requirement. A mentor is rarely also the supervisor of the church-planting project. The two roles are different; in fact, they can even be contradictory. It is best to keep these two roles separate. Denominations can assist planters by (1) encouraging pastors to make themselves available to meet with planters and, thus, facilitate the process through which planters often discover mentors and (2) clearly define the role (expectations and obligations) of a mentor.

Coaches are teachers and skill builders. They are people with the ability to help others perform at a higher level. Their focus is on the day-to-day activity of the planter and the development of the church-planting project. Coaches do not necessarily need to have been planters but they need to be familiar with all aspects of church planting and they need to understand human behavior and personality.

The role and value of a coach is that he or she:

1. Asks questions which help guide the planter to think more deeply and with greater clarity about the church planting project.
2. Helps the planter see what he/she would not otherwise see serves the vision of the planter and assists in clarifying it.
3. Provides an "outside" ear and voice for both the planter and the church-planting system
4. Adds expertise and information to the church-planting process.
5. Assists the planter and the church-planting system to reach their goals.
6. Serves as a compassionate, secure and confidential outlet to vent frustrations and problems.
7. Provides a clear line of communication between the planter and the sponsoring agency.
8. Conducts reality checks on the planter's vision, values and strategy.
9. Walks with the planter through conflict when it arises.
10. Helps the planter implement the master plan in proper sequence.
11. Works with the planter to develop strategies for recruiting, launching and fund-raising.

A coaching relationship is fostered by some sense of affinity between the planter and the coach. For this reason, assigning coaches can be problematic. Providing planters with some form of input into the selection process can prove helpful.

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Coaches may be part of the denominational system but this is not a requirement. Coaches are rarely also the supervisor of the church-planting project. The two roles are different; in fact, they can even be contradictory. It is best to keep these two roles separate. Denominations can assist planters by:

1. Identify an approved cadre of coaches from which the planter may choose.
2. Clearly define the role (expectations and obligations) of a coach.

Some people may question the need for coaches for church planters or other pastors. The answer to this question is straightforward. Natural talent and acquired knowledge are great tools for leaders who desire to plant a church or lead a church towards growth, vitality and faithfulness. These tools alone, however, may not be sufficient. The missing element is often the presence of a coach. Just as great athletes with multi-million dollar contracts need great coaches for maximum performance, so do great leaders of reflective congregations. Retaining the services of a coach is a sign of strength, not a sign of weakness. It is recognizing both that each person is unique and that no person knows everything. While spiritual friends help us develop our spiritual lives and mentors help us develop our personal and professional lives, coaches help us perform better. Coaches are part trainer, part behavior analyst, part motivator, part accountability partner, part reality detector and part resource provider. Coaches help leaders clarify their goals, better define the context in which their decisions are made, explore possible options for reaching their desired outcomes and provide support and resources once strategic decisions are made. A coach can assist with defining reality and contemplating possible action plans but leaves the responsibility for decision-making with the person being coached. Coaching may be formal or informal, paid or free, involving a contract or just a verbal agreement.

With hard work and some natural talent, most leaders can be above average. With the assistance of a coach, leaders can become outstanding! Professional coaching in a church-planting situation is usually provided on a contract-basis. The contract will usually specify the terms and extent of the coaching relationship. Typical elements of a coaching contract include the following:

- the length of the contract (usually 6-18 months)
- the method of contact between the planter, their sponsoring agency and the coach (usually via email and/or phone with in-person meetings arranged as needed)
- the frequency of contact between the planter and the coach (often one or two phone calls or meetings per month with email as-needed)
- the fee schedule for the contract (this varies greatly but is often between \$100 - \$300 per month with on-site visits at an additional fee)
- any reporting requirements of the sponsoring agency
- a clear delineation of the role of the coach
- a statement of sponsoring organization's expectations, their anticipated time-line and their definition of "success"
- any other items which the planter, coach, sponsoring agency and/or launch team members feel need to be added and to which all are in agreement

Identifying potential coaches and selecting one or more is not as difficult for the church leader as it was ten years ago. A number of companies, organizations and individuals now offer coaching for church leaders. These include Easum, Bandy and Associates, the Griffith Coaching Group, Inquest Christian Ministries and INJOY among others. In addition, several consultants and consulting groups offer training in coaching to assist sponsoring organizations in the development of an in-house cadre of coaches.

The presence of a good coach does not guarantee the success of a church plant nor does the absence of such a coach guarantee the failure of a church plant. The presence of a coach does, however, increase the likelihood of success. Additionally, a coach can help the church-planting system to refine its efforts and improve its process. A coach can, and probably will, save a church planter and the sponsoring organization many times their investment in the coaching contract.

## Developing Financial Support for Mission

By Mary Brooke Casad, Director of Mission, North Texas Conference



Starting new churches is an expensive undertaking. It's also one of the wisest ways the church can invest its money. There is no more effective evangelism tool than the development of new faith communities.

As Director of Mission for the North Texas Conference, I've been a part of a five-year process, which included developing a vision and plan of action, and a capital funds campaign resulting in pledge commitments of \$12.5 million. The insights below are offered as a result of this plan, known as Vision 2020. Our goal: 100 new churches by the year 2020. Here's what I learned is needed for conferences to build the financial support necessary for planting new churches:

### Develop a Clear Vision

Without a vision, the people perish. With a vision, the people prosper. In order to build the necessary financial support, a vision must emerge. People will support what they have had a part in creating. They must be given an opportunity for ownership in the vision if they are to fully embrace it.

Bishop William B. Oden lifted up the need for new churches at his first Annual Conference session as presiding bishop of the North Texas Conference. He invited everyone to attend a special day-long consultation on new church starts. Keynote speakers were invited to make presentations; participants were invited to share their reflections in small group settings. Their input was recorded and passed on to a task force, who was enlisted to create a plan of action for an aggressive churchstarting program in our conference. The plan was presented to the Annual Conference session and passed unanimously. Why?

The most passionate, vocal voices about this ministry area had been given an opportunity to be heard and to help shape the plan. They "owned" it, and agreed to support it. They were excited about embarking on this ambitious plan together. Thus, they are willing to raise the financial resources it will take to make the vision a reality.

### Commitment from the Bishop

In our system, it's a well-known fact that conference initiatives will simply not fly without the whole-hearted support of the bishop. Therefore, pray for a bishop who is passionate about church planting! Strong leadership that invites the involvement of others in the creation of a vision for church planting and the directives for getting there is essential. The bishop then becomes not only the leader but also the "cheerleader" for the implementation of the plan.

An enthusiastic bishop will proclaim and interpret the vision for others. As the leader of this conference priority, the bishop will work closely with those charged with fund-raising responsibilities.

Our Vision 2020 capital funds campaign in North Texas was successful because Bishop Oden first pledged to the effort himself, then sought significant pledges from the entire cabinet, then the clergy, then the local churches, then individuals. He devoted a great deal of his time to making calls on individuals who had the means to make large gifts to this endeavor.

If the bishop and other conference leaders are truly excited about the cause of starting new churches, and have the backing of the annual conference with a strategic plan, raising money will not be a chore, but rather an exciting opportunity.

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## Professional Fund-raisers

Capital funds campaigns take a significant amount of time, energy and money; therefore, it is necessary to hire professional fund-raisers. There are many competent fund-raisers; finding the right fit for your annual conference is crucial.

Our conference created a campaign office for a period of two years to work with the fundraising company. The office helped identify foundations for potential grants, as well as produce promotional materials for the campaign. This executive was in close touch with the churches and regularly attended cabinet meetings to report on the pledge status of each church by district. District superintendents then worked diligently with each congregation in their district to secure a pledge. Under the guidance of the fund-raisers, and working closely with our bishop, the executive proved to be a valuable member of the team for this effort.

## Partnership with Churches

While our Vision 2020 plan was conference-wide and thus a significant unifying event, it was also important to give churches flexibility in designating their pledges for special projects. Churches were pleased to be able to partner with particular new church starts, and the benefits were not only financial but relational as well.

Pastors were enabled in finding the needed pledge dollars in their congregations when church members were able to meet new church start pastors and hear the story of their new church. Pulpit exchanges and other joint activities between the partner church and new church-start often occurred, resulting in additional interest and support from the sponsoring congregation.

Guidelines were established by a Vision 2020 Funding Task Force to create criteria for designated pledges. Undesignated pledges went to a fund overseen by a conference agency charged with providing resources for new church starts.

Partner churches have been recognized at our annual conference session in an attempt to create a culture of churches starting churches. Seeing the annual conference as only one of the players in a new-church start is important in helping local churches take a more active role in the development of new faith communities.

## Strong Spiritual Grounding

Stewardship is, after all, a spiritual issue. Any attempt to raise financial support for the Church's mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ needs to be grounded in prayer and discernment of God's will.

Therefore, the very first step in building financial support for mission should be an intentional prayer process. In our Vision 2020 effort, a person was selected to be the spiritual director. Every church in every district was prayed for in preparation for the commitment their congregation would be asked to make. Persons were asked to participate in a week-long prayer vigil.

A capital funds campaign provides an opportunity for connections to be made...from a shared vision to the realities brought about by unified efforts. Prayer vigils and prayer partners who undergird such efforts do make a difference!

## Keep the Momentum Going!

Fund-raisers say you need a new capital fund effort every three-to-five years. As long as persons are in the habit of writing a pledge check, we should give them an opportunity to continue the practice!

Following the collection of our Vision 2020 pledges, a new shareholders program will be initiated. Individuals will be invited to participate on an annual basis for the next five years. The Vision 2020 campaign helped lay the foundation for new church starts, but only provided a fraction of the funds needed to start 100 new churches. The shareholders program will provide continued opportunity for church members to participate in the fulfillment of this vision.

If a campaign has been successful, it is important to build on that success. This helps the conference vision of targeting priorities and then providing the financial commitment to truly make them effective. It also gives persons a chance to become true supporters of mission work in their own back yard.

## Communicate!

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When persons give, they want to be assured that the money they have given is making a difference. As the funds enable new churches to be started, telling the story of the new church starts becomes crucial.

It's important for your conference communications office to use the regular channels of communication to report on the progress of the campaign. Special interpretative brochures and videos can be distributed across the conference. Speakers and special presentations at district and conference meetings can keep persons informed about the work being done.

Regular, consistent communication between the campaign/conference office and the members of the annual conference will build trust and excitement as the vision becomes reality.

I hope these insights have been helpful to you. May God bless all of our efforts to make disciples for Jesus Christ through the creation of new faith communities!

## Mobilizing Laity to Plant a New Church

### Helping Established Churches Get Involved

By: Ben Cathey,  
Senior Minister, The Orchards United Methodist Church

Let's face it; new church pastors can be lone wolves in a dangerous land. They often want to plant churches because they have new and fresh ideas, because they have an entrepreneurial spirit, or because they have a deep passion for lost people and believe with Peter Wagner that "planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic means under heaven."<sup>1</sup> These very characteristics often clash with the pastors and laity of established churches. So why bother with established churches when planting a new church? I will not try to establish a theological framework or philosophical perspective in this short article. I will, however, present the following common sense reasons for new churches to work with established churches:

1. It broadens the vision for new church plants.
2. It garners prayer support from faithful Christian people.
3. It allows laity from established churches to experience a portion of the blessing that the new church core team experiences.
4. It teaches laity from established churches to dream and to have faith in God for the future of their church also.
5. It presents a good witness to unchurched, dechurched, and non-believing people in the community by teaching them that churches are not competing against each other.
6. It unifies the Body of Christ.
7. New churches need support of established churches.

There are three ways that new church plants can work with established churches – prayer support, financial support, and volunteer support.

#### **Prayer Support**

Almost every established church has lay people who would jump at the opportunity to pray for God to work through a new church plant. These may be the blue haired saints that would never come to a church with contemporary worship, small groups, and experiential mission opportunities, but they will pray that God will use your leadership and the leadership of your core team to bless and reach people in the name of Jesus.

Gaining prayer support from an established church is a win-win situation. Bob Logan says, "Prayer is not the preparation for the battle, it is the battle."<sup>2</sup> The new church will gain prayer warriors who will help carry it through the good times and bad times. When we work we work, but when we pray God works. It's that simple. The established church will gain vitality, will take pride in the new church's accomplishments, and might even gain a new passion for its mission upon seeing the successes of its own prayer warriors.

#### **Financial Support**

Many established churches will take a special offering or make a place for you in their mission budget if you will only ask. There are a couple of bits of advice worth mentioning. One key is to ask for something specific. A congregation rarely takes pride in giving to your general budget, especially smaller congregations,

but they can take pride in buying one hundred new chairs, or a new computer, or parts of a sound system. The earlier you get specific the better. Established churches have helped The Orchard with nearly \$20,000 and looking back I should have been more specific.

Another key is to present your needs in such a way that established churches can understand them. Do not try to cast a vision for your creative and fresh ideas about how to do ministry, explain to them that you need chairs for people to sit in that are not rusty or bent or stained or covered with food like the ones in the facility you have reserved.

Lastly, it is almost useless to spend time working with established churches unless you have the full support of the senior pastor or the missions chair. The leadership of the established church needs to embrace your new church or the people of that church never will, especially when it comes to financial support. If an established church is going to be helpful to the new church plant financially then the pastor and/or missions chair needs to announce your needs, ask the congregation to meet those needs, and follow through. Anything less than this commitment will produce minimal results. During the preparation stages of The Orchard I spent many hours traveling to meet with pastor after pastor in my district and outside my district. Only those churches with a specific commitment from the pastor have given more than a minimal amount of financial support.

Again, this can be a win-win situation for the two churches. The new church will gain needed financial support and the established church will become part of God's mission through the new church. Every established church can gain vitality, new direction, and increased passion when it helps a new church succeed in reaching people for Jesus.

### **Volunteer Support**

This may be the most effective way to involve laity in the mission of new church plants, while also producing the best results for established churches. There is nothing that will raise the passion of an established church like helping to start a new congregation with hands on, face-to-face missionary ministry involvement. The Orchard was able to involve established churches in two very important ways.

1. Established churches brought teams of people to do servant evangelism projects before the core team even began meeting. Nine different established churches brought teams of people to our local area to complete twelve different projects in the name of The Orchard. Teams from established churches gave away Cokes and washed cars for free as an illustration of God's love. The cards we handed out were simple. On the front they said, "We hope you will accept this free gift as an illustration of God's love, no strings attached." On the back we had a little information about The Orchard. With the help of these nine churches we were able to make approximately 3800 servant evangelism contacts in the local community before we launched.
2. Established churches brought volunteers to help with set-up, childcare, and hospitality during the first eight weeks after the launch. We asked churches to bring teams of 8-10 people to help. When the volunteers arrived we prayed with them and paired them up with Orchard core team members to work in different areas.

Volunteer involvement from these established churches also turned out to be a win-win situation. The churches that helped with servant evangelism projects gained lay people with a renewed vision for local evangelism and mission. They saw it work 15, 50, and 75 miles away and they wanted to take it back home with them. The Orchard also received a special blessing. By the time I asked the core team to do a servant evangelism project it had already become a norm for us. The established churches helped me show the core team that servant evangelism worked in our local context.

The churches that brought volunteers during the weeks after launch helped us in a tremendous way. One of our principles going into the launch was that we would not ask a newcomer to help for at least six weeks – especially the dechurched or unchurched newcomer. We did not want them to feel like we were going to use them to achieve our institutional goals. The established churches helped us accomplish this goal.

The people from established churches gained a whole new perspective and appreciation for their church when they came to help specifically with set-up. Meeting to unload a trailer at 7:30 AM in the morning, and loading it back up by 12:30 PM will make any established church member thankful for the building that they

have often taken for granted. The established church members also gained greater passion for ministry and mission as they came face-to-face with the core team members of The Orchard and the people they were reaching in our local community.

As you begin the planting process do not miss the opportunity to help established churches become involved with what God is doing in new churches all across America by asking them to help with prayer, financial, and volunteer support. The church you are planting will gain needed support, and the established churches that really do help will gain increased passion for ministry.

#### Footnotes

1 Wagner, C. Peter. Church Planting for a Greater Harvest. Ventura, CA; Regal, 1990, 16.

2 Logan, Robert. Personal Conversation in March 2001

## Media In Worship

Tommy Willingham, Lead Pastor, Hope Church; Dallas, GA

As a boy growing up in the suburbs of Atlanta, GA, I was blessed to have parents who never said, “Because I said so!” I was always encouraged to ask “why” things were as they were, and to use that “why” to determine “what” I would do, and “how” I would go about it. I have used that philosophy in all areas of my life, and have been richly blessed to see it help me in discovering the powerful use of media in worship.

So, if you’re thinking about using media in worship, first stop and ask yourself the question, “Why?” I have received numerous calls and emails from enquiring folks who are fast and ready to begin utilizing media in worship, but when I ask them why, they seem to flounder and have little response. So, “Why” media in worship?

First of all we minister in an “Audio-Visual” age. Every day we are surrounded by a multisensory collage of video, graphics, color, movement, displays, and a host of media that taps into all five of our senses—Sight, Smell, Hearing, Touch, and Taste— All are intended to get our attention, and convey compelling information in a short timeframe.

The human body is wired to receive and respond to various stimuli as these five senses send signals to the brain which, in turn, responds by sending signals to the other parts of the body in order for the body’s response to be appropriate to the situation. Do you remember when you were a child and your parents told you not to touch something because it was hot? Most of us were not convinced with that “talking-head”, and had to actually feel the heat before we realized exactly what “hot” meant! So it is within the church setting. We can stand behind lofty pulpits and “tell” folks over and over again, but when we are able to help them actually experience the story, our efforts have much amplified impact on the people we desire to see respond to the greatest message ever known to humanity!

But this philosophy really isn’t anything new in the world of communication. For centuries people have shared the message of the gospel through culturally appropriate methods. The early church relied on vivid story telling sprinkled with parables and illustrations to pass the message from home to home, and person to person. In the fifteenth century the printing press stoked intellectual fires, helping usher in an era of enlightenment. This great cultural rebirth was inspired by widespread access to and appreciation for classical art and literature, and these translated into a renewed passion for artistic expression. And through it we have developed into a multi-sensory culture experiencing life through the diversity of print, music, video, computer, and many other forms of communicative media on a daily basis.

So, “Why” use media in worship? Because that is the language our people are accustomed to hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, and smelling thousands of times each day of their lives. Utilizing these forms of media offers the Church an opportunity to more effectively speak the message of the gospel truths in a relevant and transforming way to a world desperately in need of some good news for their lives.

When planting Hope Church in 1997, I was aware of the “Why” I wanted to use media in worship. Now, the question was “What?”— What do I need? What is available? What resources might I find that will help me reach the 217,000 people within twenty miles of Hope who don’t currently have any affiliation with any local church?

Like most new church plants, finances were an issue. I knew I would be limited in how much I could initially invest to get up and running with media in worship from the first week. PATIENCE might be a key word to all new church planters. Rome wasn’t built in a day, and neither will your new plant be a finished product the first week. I started with two “Kodak Ektagraphic 3” slide-projectors. The company we ordered them from was able to take my measurements from the school cafeteria where we had our worship each week, and provide the proper lens to project the distance and size I would have available. I didn’t have the budget for any high-tech screens, so I found a large piece of white canvas that we cut to make two screens that could be hung each week to the sides of the stage in order to project the lyrics of the songs. We ordered our slides from

Worship Visions (1-800-368- 6701), and build a portfolio that we kept in a slide-folder. We also applied for a Christian Copyright License (CCLI) through Christian Copyright Licensing International (www.ccli.com). They base the cost on average attendance and we were able to obtain our license for less than \$100 per year.

Some people came to the new church looking for the hymnals. We kindly explained that we used the projector format to make it easier to follow the lyrics, and also to keep people looking up as they praised the Lord, rather than have their face buried in a hymnal trying to figure out which stanza we were on. But the music we used was not in a hymnal anyway, so that quickly became a moot point. We used this method of projecting the lyrics for a year before we were able to upgrade to a laptop computer and a liquid crystal display (LCD) projector. This allowed us the capabilities to use live camera feeds, video clips, and we were able to then use Photo Shop to create high-quality graphics and Power Point to generate the entire presentation. The day we made this move was a quantum leap in using multi-sensory media in worship! My advice to anyone starting would be to go with the LCD projector and laptop from the beginning. Even though it is more costly, it will greatly enhance your ability to reach the audio-visual culture in your area. Investigate and research the newest technology available, and begin with the most you can – And this might be a case where your question does not need to be, “What can we afford?” – But rather, “What can we not afford?” (For video clips you will need a license Motion Picture Licensing Corporation – (MPLC) – We pay less than \$100 dollars a year for this license...)

So, then, after looking at the “Why?” and the “What?”, the next question, is “How?” How do I go about utilizing media to create a multi-sensory worship experience?

The first thing, before anything else – BUILD A TEAM! As lead pastor of Hope, my main responsibilities are preaching, teaching and vision-casting. That’s a full-time job! I do not have the time, skills, or God-given design to create, produce and format multi-sensory media on a weekly basis fifty-two weeks a year. Find people who are already learned in many of the new technological understandings of equipment, resources, formatting, and presenting. Identify people who have these gifts as well as leadership skills. Invest time in these people, and help them see the use of multi-sensory worship as a part of the vision of the Church to transform people’s lives forever-for-the-better through the message of the Gospel! “Crank them up, and turn them loose!” Let them begin building a team of people who will utilize their own God-design to create, format, and present the Gospel message through media each week in the worship setting.

As you create multi-sensory worship, make sure it’s done with EXCELLENCE! Would you rather watch CNN, or some local cable access station? Poor media can be much worse than no media at all. Even though you will not have the resources of a CNN, you can make your presentation more like CNN than the local access station by staying up with the latest, cutting edge styles and look. Begin to be more sensitive as you surf through the channels’ – How do they use graphics? How are they mixing video? What colors go together the best? Be observant to these things because the people you are trying to reach in an hour of worship once a week are exposed to these things multiple hours every day – each week – fifty-two weeks a year. They’ve come to expect and respond to excellence. Don’t cheapen the Gospel message with cheesy media, or compromised presentations. Train your team to think excellence, and challenge them to continue raising the bar as you grow in your media presentation and develop your ministry week after week.

**A Week in the Life:** Though there are many churches using multi-sensory media in worship much more effectively than we at Hope Church. Here is a week in the life from idea, to creation, to presentation of a multisensory presentation in a worship experience at Hope.

**Monday:** Worship design team meets at 7:30 each Monday evening. I (or the preacher for that week) bring a theme, an outline, and a metaphor of what we would like to convey in the message – (And we view the message as everything people will experience from the time they pull into the parking lot throughout the 70 minutes of worship on any given Sunday.) The worship team is made up of preacher, music leader, one or two key musicians from the band, the A/V team coordinator, and the person who will be directing everything on Sunday.

After we prayerfully look at the theme with “So What?” – So what will this mean to those folks God will wake up and get into this place on Sunday? – We begin to create an order for the service. We ask if there is any possible movie clip or skit that might really set up the theme. We think through our minds to see if there might be a song (secular or spiritual) that really accents the message theme. If I know the preached portion of the message will be deeper, or more intense, we might look at songs, skit, or movie clip that are a little lighter and vice-versa. We might choose to produce our own video clip, but we are not fully set up at this time to do as

quality a job of this as we'd like. We then begin selecting songs that are appropriate to the theme, and look at how all of these components flow together. We are very sensitive to transitions between the many parts of the service and how we can best enhance the message through smoother and more appropriate transitions in order that the "parts" make one cohesive "whole" message that's presented during that worship experience. Our minds are on transformation rather than simply sharing information. We leave that two hour meeting with all the pieces, and each do our part in bringing them together for the coming Sunday's worship.

**Tuesday:** A technical guide is completed that has the entire service broken down into all the technical pieces such as lighting, time limits, cameras, mics, live video, etc... Our administrative assistant provides our volunteer administrative team with the tech guide and they format, print and fold the worship guide that will be given to each person who attends worship on Sunday.

A/V coordinator rents any video clips that might be used, previews them, does a sound check, and cues them on the main VCR in the worship center ready to go on Sunday.

The musicians go over music, purchase any c.d.'s they may need to better learn any new songs, transpose any necessary music in preparation for their Wednesday rehearsal.

**Wednesday:** Sermon has been fleshed out and is usually completed by Wednesday afternoon. A copy of the message notes it sent to the administrative assistant who mobilizes the administrative volunteer team to format, print, fold, and insert the message notes page into the worship guides.

The worship team rehearses all the songs that will be used in worship, coordinates with the entire praise team (Band and singers) when to be on stage, and how to best transition between the songs and other parts of worship to create an environment of excellence and order for the congregation to follow...

Any skit that may be used has been passed on to the drama team who gets any necessary props together, disperses the script, and rehearses in the worship center with mics and lighting to insure the most effect from the skit...

**Thursday:** Graphics and power point are completed, looked over on the screen in the worship center for any clarification that might need to be made, and saved on the main network for the computer person to have available on Sunday.

Basically used for anything that needs to be changed or tweaked to best serve the message for the day...

**Sunday:** Personnel arrive an hour before the first worship service. Preacher for the day, praise team, technical team including the director, sound techs, computer operator, camera persons (We use three live-feed cameras throughout the service mixing between the live cameras and graphics...) all look over the tech guide to familiarize themselves with the flow and technical portions of the worship.

Praise team does sound check – All persons using microphones that day are hooked up and checked – New batteries installed in all mics, headsets, and a plethora of other electronic devices (Be prepare for about a million dollars budgeted for batteries alone!)

Director goes over tech guide and assures lighting and video/graphic mixing is coordinated with the computer person and camera personnel.

Entire team prays together before people start arriving, take one last bathroom break (essential!), and take our respective places to begin worship...

And last, but definitely not least – LIVES ARE TRANSFORMED FOREVER FOR THE BETTER through the age-old Gospel message shared in a relevant format!

I hope this helps you as a new church pastor. Please see our web page as you may find it helpful to see the graphics we use. Go to the "View Messages Online" section and we have all the graphics as they are used in the preached portion of the messages available. ([www.placeofhope.org](http://www.placeofhope.org))



## Why Church Plants Fail

By Jim Griffith and Don Nations

Not all new church starts make it. Not all church-planting projects become self-supporting. Despite the hard work of planters and sponsoring organizations, some church plants do not survive. Understanding the primary reasons for these less-than-successful planting projects can help planters and sponsoring agencies avoid the actions that often lead to disappointing results. This article will review ten factors commonly found in church planting projects that fail.

### 1. Lack of a clear definition of “success” and a clear exit strategy.

Sponsoring organizations need to clearly state their expectations and time-line for new church starts. Failure to do so leaves planters wondering if the development of the church is satisfactory and supervisors lacking objective measures by which to evaluate the planting project. A clearly defined time-line provides all parties with a common standard by which to assess the development of the new church start. If goals are not met on time, a review of the situation may allow for corrections, additional training, a clarification of target audience or other helpful action. It may also highlight the need to implement the exit strategy and aid the sponsoring agency to invest its money wisely.

### 2. Premature birth.

Starting public worship too soon is a factor found in almost all church plants that fail. Presenting a quality weekly worship service requires a large investment of time and energy. In most new church starts, the beginning of weekly worship services is accompanied by a decrease in outreach and evangelistic activities. This is due to the demands of preparing sermons, coordinating music, preparing bulletins, set-up and tear-down of the facility in which worship occurs and the expectations of those attending to receive pastoral care from the planter. Launching with a very small group of people almost inevitably leads to disappointing results and a small or non-existent church. Planters usually underestimate the amount of time needed to gather a sufficient number of people to move to public worship. Sponsoring agencies usually do this as well.

### 3. Mismatch between the planter and the community/context/target audience.

It is important that the planter have an affinity for the community/context/target audience for the church plant. It seems like an obvious statement but this is a common factor in failed church plants. Factors such as socio-economic status, level of education, region of the county, population density preferred by the planter (and his or her family, if applicable), language, cultural differences, interests, family situation and recreational activities that are enjoyed all play a role in determining the affinity a planter has for a particular context. This is not to say that a planter cannot be successful in an environment that differs significantly from his or her upbringing or preferences, just that it will almost certainly be significantly more difficult to do so. Sponsoring agencies must know both the context and the prospective planter in sufficient detail to make a determination of likely affinity prior to the assignment of a planter for a project.

#### 4. Insufficient assessment.

With all of the resources that are invested in a typical church plant, it is amazing that so many sponsoring organizations do so little assessment of either the context or the prospective planter. It is common that one or more people with little experience or knowledge about church planting select planters. This selection is based upon a host of factors such as “do we like the person,” “are they from our tribe,” “are they related to someone we know,” “does it feel like they will do a good job,” “are they likeable and outgoing,” “do they really need this job” and “are they a warm and willing body.” These factors are insufficient for selecting a planter. Church-planters need a skill set that is different from that needed by pastors of existing churches. There is a need for a more objective standard to be used in the selection process. The best indicator of the future performance of a person is his or her past performance. The use of an outside consultant or assessment center or a trained team of assessors from within the sponsoring agency will result in an improved selection process and increase the likelihood of success.

#### 5. Lack of training and coaching.

Church planting projects in which the planter does not receive significant training and the ongoing support of a trained coach are more likely to fail than those in which this investment is made. Like athletes, even competent pastoral leaders need high-quality coaching if they are going to achieve peak performance. Planting a church is hard work and most pastoral leaders have had little past training that would prepare them for such an endeavor. In fact, some of their training may even work against their success in a church-planting situation (such as the emphasis in many Bible colleges and seminaries on pastoral care, counseling, Biblical languages and debating the finer distinctions between theological positions). Compared to the large amount invested in most planting projects, the costs of training and coaching are relatively small. Some sponsoring organizations invest over \$100,000 in a new church start. Quality training and coaching might increase this investment by \$5,000 but it might also greatly increase the probability of the success of the church plant.

#### 6. Putting every egg in one basket.

It is not uncommon that a planter, or even a sponsoring agency, depends upon one event or approach or advertising campaign to make the church plant successful. In church planting circles, this is what we call a bad idea! The development of most successful new church starts is due less to an overwhelming response to one method and more to a series of waves of new people coming in response to a variety of events, approaches and or advertisements. If the future of the project is staked upon the result of one action, then the probability of failure is high. Every context is different; what worked in one setting may or may not work in the new setting. A better approach is to pursue a variety of actions and measure the response of the target audience. Experience will quickly identify those strategies that are more effective in the context of a particular church plant.

#### 7. Too much overhead too fast.

There is a temptation when planting a church to attempt to quickly acquire the trappings of a “real church,” that is, to have the things an existing church takes for granted. Planters often invest resources in video projectors, computers, filing cabinets, copiers, phone systems and office space early in the planting project. The problem with this approach is two-fold. First, these items do not—in and of themselves— attract new people to the church. If church planting is about anything, it is about putting people in seats. The second problem is these expenses take resources away from the activities that are likely to attract new people—and some of these expenses occur every month. A new church start is not an existing church and it cannot afford to act like it is. Careful selection of where to invest time and money results in a church-planting project more likely to succeed.

#### 8. The inability or unwillingness to recruit new people.

The biblical basis for planting new churches is the command of Jesus to make disciples of all people. While new church starts almost always attract people who have been attending existing churches, rarely should this be the target audience for a church plant. Planters who either cannot or will not invest themselves in the

difficult work of recruiting new people to participate in the church are almost certainly going to produce disappointing results. Planters or sponsoring agencies that are more concerned with caring for the few who are currently coming than reaching additional people will find it difficult to develop a self-supporting church. Recruiting is both art and science; both a gift and the result of intentional, purposeful work. No recruitment means no new church.

### 9. Lack of focus and ignoring the priorities.

In every planting situation, the planter and the supervisor need to answer a few fundamental questions. These include: (1) Whom are we trying to reach through this project? (2) What strategies will be used to reach them? (3) What is the time-line for the development of the new church? and (4) What are the essential steps that must be taken and in what order must they be completed? Many planters work very hard but see few results from their labor. While planting is “sowing intensive,” sometimes the lack of results is due to hard work on non-essential tasks. The priorities must be done. The most important items must be addressed. The critical actions must be taken and at the right time. A lack of focus will result in a burned-out planter and a failed church plant.

### 10. Inebriation (also known as being drunk on your vision).

Church planters can often describe in vivid detail the church they are attempting to plant. They have grand ideas about what they will do and how people will respond. They can taste the community of faith that is going to result from their efforts. They spin their vision to others in the attempt to draw them into involvement in the new church. And in this process, they begin to believe everything they are saying and begin to consider as inevitable everything they are dreaming. They are, in short, drunk on their own vision. It is good to be enthusiastic about the planting project but planters also need a healthy dose of reality. In fact, one of the primary values of a coach is that they can help keep at least one foot of the planter rooted in reality. Without this perspective, planters begin to make assumptions about how effective their methods will be and excuses when reality is not as good as they expected. Church plants can fail when the planter is detached from reality and, hence, fails to make the course adjustments that are necessary in every planting situation.

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